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SERMONS

Preach'd on

Several Occasions.

BY

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MVSEVM
BRITAN
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Sin the most formidable Evil.

SERMON I.

Geneſis xxxix. 9.

How can I do this great Wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?

THE Text is the Record of *Joſeph*'s Innocence and Victory, conſecrated in Scripture for the Honour and Imitation of that excellent Saint in ſucceeding Ages. He had been try'd by ſharp Afflictions, the conſpiring Envy of his Brethren, and the cruel Effects of it, Baniſhment and Servitude, *and poſſeſt his Soul in Patience*: here he was encounter'd by a more dangerous Temptation in another

kind, and preſerv'd his Integrity. Adverſity excites the Spirit to ſerious Recollection, arms it with Reſolution to endure the Aſſaults, and ſtop the entrance of what is afflicting to Nature: Pleaſure by gentle Inſinuations relaxes the Mind to a looſe Security, ſoftens and melts the Heart, and makes it eaſily receptive of corrupt Impreſſions.

Now to repreſent the Grace of God, that preſerved *Joſeph*, in its Radiance and Efficacy, we muſt conſider the ſeveral Circumſtances that increaſed the Difficulty of the double Victory, over the Tempter, and himſelf.

1. The Tempter, *his Miſtreſs*, who had deveſted the native Modeſty of the bluſhing Sex, and by her Careſſes and Blandiſhments ſought to draw him to compliance with her Deſires. Her ſuperiour Quality might ſeem to make her Requeſt

Requeſt have the force of a Command over him.

2. The Sollicitation, *Lie with me.* There are no Sins to which there is a ſtronger Inclination in our corrupted Nature, than to Acts of Senſuality. The Temptation was heighten'd by the lure of Profit and Advancement, that he might obtain by her Favour, and Intereſt in her Husband, who was an eminent Officer in the Egyptian Court: and the Denial would be extreamly provoking, both in reſpect it ſeem'd to be a Contempt injurious to her Dignity, and was a Diſappointment of her ardent Expectation. Hatred and Revenge upon Refuſal, are equal to the Luſt of *an Imperious Whoriſh Woman.* We read the Effects of it, in this Chapter: for upon his rejecting her Deſires, inflam'd with Rage, and to purge her ſelf, ſhe turn'd his Accuſer, wounded his Reputation, depriv'd him of his

Regeramus ipſæ crimen, atq; ultro impiam Venerem arguamus: ſcelere velandum eſt ſcelus. *Senec. Hippolitus.*

Liberty, and expos'd his Life to extream Peril. *Joseph* chose rather to lie in the Dust, than to rise by Sin.

3. The Opportunity was ready, and the Object present: 'tis said, *there was none of the Men of the House within.* She had the advantage of Secrecy to fasten the Temptation upon him. When a Sin may be easily committed, and easily conceal'd, the Restraints of Fear and Shame are taken off, and every Breath of a Temptation is strong enough to overthrow the carnally-minded. The purest and noblest Chastity is from a Principle of Duty within, not constrain'd by the apprehension of Discovery and Severity.

4. The Continuance of the Temptation: *She spake to him day by day.* Her Complexion was Lust and Impudence, and his repeated Denials were ineffectual to quench her incensed Desires, the black Fire that darkned her Mind. *She caught*

him by the Garment, ſaying, Lie with me: ſhe was ready to proſtitute her ſelf, and raviſh him.

5. The Perſon tempted, *Joſeph*, in the flower of his Age, the ſeaſon of Senſuality, when innumerable, by the Force and Swinge of their vicious Appetites, are impell'd to break the holy Law of God.

6. His Repulſe of the Temptation was ſtrong and peremptory: *How can I do this great Wickedneſs?* He felt no Sympathy, no ſenſual Tenderneſs, but expreſt an Impoſſibility of conſenting to her guilty Deſire. We have in *Joſeph* exemplified that Property of the Regenerate, *He that is born of God, cannot ſin*: by a ſacred potent Inſtinct in his Breaſt, he is preſerved not only from the conſummate Acts, but recoils from the firſt Offers to it. 1 Joh. 3. 9.

7. The Reaſons are ſpecified of his rejecting her polluting Motion. *Behold, my Maſter knows not what is with*

me in the Houſe, and he hath committed all that he hath to my Hands: there is none greater in his Houſe than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, becauſe thou art his Wife: How then can I do this great Wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God? 'Twas a complicated Crime of Injuſtice and Uncleanneſs; a moſt injurious Violation of the ſtrongeſt Ties of Duty and Gratitude to his Maſter, and of the ſacred Marriage-Covenant to her Husband, and the foulest Blot to their Perſons: Therefore *how can I commit a Sin* ſo contrary to natural Conſcience, and ſupernatural Grace, and provoke God? Thus I have briefly conſidered the Narrative of *Joſeph*'s Temptation; and that Divine Grace preſerved him untouched from that contagious Fire, may be reſembled to the miraculous preſerving the three *Hebrew* Martyrs unſinged, in the midſt of the flaming Furnace. The Patience of

Job,

Job, and the Chaſtity of *Joſeph*, are tranſmitted by the Secretaries of the Holy Ghoſt in Scripture, to be in perpetual Remembrance and Admiration.

From this ſingular Inſtance of *Joſeph*, who was neither ſeduced by the Allurements of his Miſtreſs, nor terrified by the Rage of her deſpis'd Affection, to ſin againſt God, I ſhall obſerve two general Points.

I. *That Temptations to Sin, how alluring ſoever, or terrifying, ought to be rejected with Abhorrence.*

II. *That the Fear of God is a ſure Defence and Guard againſt the ſtrongeſt Temptation.*

I will explain and prove the firſt, and only ſpeak a little of the ſecond in a Branch of the Application.

I. *That Temptations to Sin, how alluring ſoever, or terifying, are to be rejected with Abhorrence.*

There will be convincing Proof of this, by conſidering two Things.

1. That Sin in its Nature, preſcinding from the Train of woful Effects, is the greateſt Evil.

2. That, relatively to us, it is the moſt pernicious deſtructive Evil.

1. That Sin conſidered in it ſelf is the greateſt Evil. This will be evident by conſidering the general Nature of it, as directly oppoſite to God the ſupream Good. The Definition of Sin expreſſes its eſſential Evil; *'tis the Tranſgreſſion of the Divine Law*, and conſequently oppoſes the Rights of God's Throne, and obſcures the Glory of his Attributes that are exercis'd in the Moral

Moral Government of the World. God, as Creator, *is our King, our Lawgiver and Judg.* From his Propriety in us ariſes his juſt Title to Soveraign Power over us: *Know ye* Pſal. 100. *that the Lord he is God; 'tis he that made us, not we our ſelves; we are his People, and the Sheep of his Paſture.* The Creatures of a lower Order are uncapable of diſtinguiſhing between Moral Good and Evil, and are determin'd by the weight of Nature to what is meerly ſenſible, and therefore are uncapable of a Law to regulate their Choice. But Man, who is endowed with the Powers of Underſtanding and Election, to conceive and chooſe what is Good, and reject what is Evil, is govern'd by a Law, the declared Will of his Maker: accordingly a Law, the Rule of his Obedience, was written in his Heart.

Now Sin, the Tranſgreſſion of this Law, contains many great Evils.

1. Sin

1. Sin is a Rebellion againſt the Soveraign Majeſty of God, that gives the Life of Authority to the Law. Therefore Divine Precepts are enforced with the moſt proper and binding Motive to Obedience, *I am the Lord.* He that with purpoſe and pleaſure commits Sin, implicitely renounces his Dependance upon God, as his Maker and Governour, over-rules the Law, and arrogates an irreſponſible Licence to do his own Will. This is expreſt by thoſe Atheiſtical Deſigners, who
Pſal. 12. 4. ſaid, *With our Tongue we will prevail, our Lips are our own: who is Lord over us?* The Language of Actions, that is more natural and convincing than of Words, declares that ſinful Men deſpiſe the Commands of God, as if they were not his Creatures and Subjects. What a Diſhonour, what a Diſpleaſure is it to the God of Glory, that proud Duſt ſhould fly in his Face, and controul his Authority?

rity? *He has ten thouſand times ten thouſand Angels that are high in Dignity, and excel in Strength, waiting in a Poſture of Reverence and Obſervance about his Throne, ready to do his Will*: How provoking is it for a deſpicable Worm to contravene his Law, and lift his Hand againſt him? It will be no Excuſe to plead the Commands of Men for Sin: for as much as God is more glorious than Men, ſo much more are his Commands to be reſpected and obeyed than Mens. When there is an evident Oppoſition between the Laws of Men and of God, we muſt diſobey our Superiours, tho we diſpleaſe them, and obey our Supream Ruler. He that does what is forbidden, or neglects to do what is commanded by the Divine Law, to pleaſe Men, tho inveſted with the higheſt Sovereignty on Earth, is guilty of double Wickedneſs; of Impiety, in depoſing God; and Idola-

Dan. 7. 10. Pſal. 103. 20.

Idolatry, in deifying Men.

It is an extream Aggravation of this Evil, in that Sin as it is a disclaiming our Homage to God, so 'tis in true account a yielding Subjection to the Devil. For Sin is in the ſtricteſt Propriety *his Work*. The Original Rebellion in Paradiſe was by his Temptation, and all the actual and habitual Sins of Men ſince the Fall, are by his efficacious Influence.

2 Cor. 4. 4. *He darkens the Carnal Mind*, and ſways the polluted Will; he excites and inflames the vicious Affections,

Epheſ. 2. 2. and imperiouſly *rules in the Children of Diſobedience*. He is therefore ſtiled *the Prince and God of this World*. And what more contumelious Indignity can there be, than the preferring to the glorious Creator of Heaven and Earth, a damned Spirit, the moſt curſed part of the Creation? It is moſt reaſonable, that the Baſeneſs of the Competitor, ſhould be a Foil to reinforce the Luſtre

Luſtre of God's Authority: yet Men reject God, and comply with the Tempter. O prodigious Perverſneſs!

2. Sin vilifies the ruling Wiſdom of God, that preſcrib'd the Law to Men. Altho the Dominion of God over us be Supreme and Abſolute, yet 'tis exercis'd according *to the Counſel of his Will*, by the beſt Means, for the beſt Ends; he is accordingly ſtiled by the Apoſtle, *The eternal King, and only wiſe God.* 'Tis the glorious Prerogative of his Soveraignty and Deity, that he can do no Wrong: for he neceſſarily acts according to the Excellencies of his Nature. Particularly, his Wiſdom is ſo relucent in his Laws, that the ſerious Contemplation of it, will raviſh the ſincere Minds of Men into a Compliance with them. They are framed with exact Congruity to the Nature of God, and his Relation to us, and to the Faculties

1 Tim. 1.

culties of Man before he was corrupted. From hence the Divine Law being the Tranſcript not only of God's Will, but his Wiſdom, binds the Underſtanding and Will, our leading Faculties, to eſteem and approve, to conſent and chooſe all his Precepts as beſt. Now Sin vilifies the Infinite Underſtanding of God with reſpect both to the Precepts of the Law, the Rule of our Duty, and the Sanction annex'd to confirm its Obligation. It does conſtructively tax the Precepts as unequal, too rigid and ſevere a Confinement to our Wills and Actions. Thus the impious Rebels complain, *The Ways of the Lord are not equal*, as injurious to their Liberty, and not worthy of Obſervance. What St. *James* ſaith, to correct the uncharitable, cenſorious Humour of ſome in his time, *He that ſpeaks Evil of his Brother, and judges his Brother, ſpeaks Evil of the Law, and judges*

James 4. 11.

judges the Law, as an imperfect and raſh Rule, is applicable to Sinners in any other kind. As an unskilful Hand by ſtraining too high, breaks the Strings of an Inſtrument, and ſpoils the Muſick; ſo the Strictneſs and the Severity of the Precepts, breaks the harmonious Agreement between the Wills of Men and the Law, and caſts an Imputation of Imprudence upon the Law-giver. This is the implicit Blaſphemy in Sin.

Beſides, the Law has Rewards and Puniſhments, to ſecure our Reſpects and Obedience to it. The wiſe God knows the Frame of the reaſonable Creature, what are the inward Springs of our Actions; and has accordingly propounded ſuch Motives to our Hope and Fear, the moſt active Paſſions, as may engage us to perform our Duty. He promiſes his *Favour that is better than Life*, to the Obedient, and threatens

his Wrath, that is worſe than Death, to the Rebellious. Now Sin makes it evident, that theſe Motives are not effectual in the Minds of Men: And this reflects upon the Wiſdom of the Law-giver, as if defective in not binding his Subjects firmly to their Duty; for if the Advantage or Pleaſure that may be gain'd by Sin, be greater than the Reward that is promiſed to Obedience, and the Puniſhment that is threatned againſt the Tranſgreſſion, the Law is unable to reſtrain from Sin, and the Ends of Government are not obtained. Thus Sinners in venturing upon forbidden things, reproach the Underſtanding of the Divine Law-giver.

3. Sin is a Contrariety to the unſpotted Holineſs of God. Of all the glorious and benign Conſtellations of the Divine Attributes that ſhine in the Law of God, his Holineſs has the brighteſt Luſtre.

God

God is holy in all his Works, but the moſt venerable and precious Monument of his Holineſs is the Law. For the Holineſs of God conſiſts in the Correſpondence of his Will and Actions with his moral Perfections, Wiſdom, Goodneſs and Juſtice; and the Law is the perfect Copy of his Nature and Will. The Pſalmiſt who had a purged Eye, ſaw and admir'd its Purity and Perfection. *The Commandment of the Lord is pure, inlightning the Eyes.* Pſal. 19. *The Word is very near, therefore thy Servant loves it.* Pſal. 119. 140. 'Tis the perſpicuous Rule of our Duty without Blemiſh or Imperfection: *The Commandment is holy, juſt and good.* It injoins nothing but what is abſolutely Good, without the leaſt Tincture of Evil. The Sum of it is ſet down by the Apoſtle, to *live ſoberly*, that is, to abſtain from any thing that may ſtain the Excellence of an underſtanding Creature: To *live*

righteouſly, which reſpects the State and Situation wherein God has diſpoſed Men for his Glory: It comprehends all the reſpective Duties to others, to whom we are united by the Bands of Nature, or of Civil Society, or of Spiritual Communion: *And to live godly*, which includes all the internal and outward Duties we owe to God, who is the Soveraign of our Spirits, whoſe Will muſt be the Rule, and his Glory the End of our Actions. In ſhort, The Law is ſo form'd, that preſcinding from the Authority of the Law-giver, its Holineſs and Goodneſs lays an eternal Obligation on us to obey it. Now Sin is not only by Interpretation, a Reproach to the Wiſdom and other Perfections of God, but directly and formally a Contrariety to his Infinite Sanctity and Purity; for it conſiſts in a not doing what the Law commands, or doing what it forbids.

'Tis

'Tis therefore ſaid, *That the Carnal Mind is Enmity againſt God*: An active, immediate and irreconcilable Contrariety to his holy Nature and Will: From hence there is a reciprocal Hatred between God and Sinners: *God is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity*, without an infinite Diſpliſcence, the Effects of which will fall upon Sinners; and tho 'tis an Impiety hardly conceivable, yet the Scripture tells us, that *they are Haters of God*. 'Tis true, God by the tranſcendent Excellence of his Nature is uncapable of ſuffering any Evil, and there are few in the preſent State arrived to ſuch Malice, as to declare open Enmity and War againſt God. In the Damned this Hatred is explicit and direct, the Fever is heightned to a Frenzy, the bleſſed God is the Object of their Curſes and Eternal Averſation: If their Rage could extend to him, and their Power were equal to their

Rom. 11.

Rom. 1.

Deſires, they would dethrone the moſt High. And the Seeds of this are in the Breaſts of Sinners here. As the fearful Expectation of irreſiſtible and fiery Vengeance increaſes, their Averſation increaſes. They endeavour to raze out the Inſcription of God in their Souls, and to extinguiſh the Thoughts and Senſe of their Inſpector and Judg. They wiſh he were not All-ſeeing and Almighty, but Blind and Impotent, uncapable to vindicate the Honour of his deſpiſed Deity. *The Fool hath ſaid in his Heart, there is no God.* The Heart is the Fountain of Deſires, and Actions interpret the Thoughts and Affections, from whence the Inference is direct and concluſive, that habitual Sinners, *who live without God in the World*, have ſecret Deſires; there was no Soveraign Being, to obſerve and require an Account of all their Actions. The radical Cauſe of this Hatred

is

is from the Oppoſition of the ſinful polluted Wills of Men, to the Holineſs of God; for that Attribute excites his Juſtice, and Power, and Wrath, to puniſh Sinners. Therefore the Apoſtle ſaith, *They are Enemies to God in their Minds through wicked Works.* The naked repreſenting of this Impiety, that a reaſonable Creature ſhould hate the bleſſed Creator for his moſt Divine Perfections, cannot but ſtrike with Horror. O the Sinfulneſs of Sin!

4. Sin is the Contempt and Abuſe of his excellent Goodneſs. This Argument is as vaſt as God's innumerable Mercies, whereby he allures and obliges us to Obedience: I ſhall reſtrain my Diſcourſe of it, to three things wherein the Divine Goodneſs is very conſpicuous, and moſt ungratefully deſpiſed by Sinners.

1*ſt*. His creating Goodneſs. 'Tis clear, without the leaſt ſhadow of

Doubt, that nothing can give the firſt Being to it ſelf; for this were to be before it was, which is a direct Contradiction: and 'tis evident that God is the ſole Author of our Beings. Our Parents afforded the groſs matter of our compounded Nature, but the Variety and Union, the Beauty and Uſefulneſs of the ſeveral Parts, which is ſo wonderful, that the Body is compoſed of as many Miracles as Members, was the Deſign of his Wiſdom, and the Work of his Hands. The lively Idea and perfect Exemplar of that regular Fabrick, was modell'd in the Divine Mind. This affected the Pſalmiſt with Admiration: *I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy Works, and that my Soul knows right-well. Thine Eyes did ſee my Subſtance, yet being imperfect, and in thy Book all my Members were written, which in continuance were faſhioned, when as yet there was none*

Pſal. 139. 14, 15, 16.

of

of them. And *Job* obſerves, *Thy Hands have made me and faſhioned me round about.* Job 10. 8. The Soul, or principal Part, is of a Celeſtial Original, inſpired from *the Father of Spirits.* The Faculties of Underſtanding and Election, are the indelible Characters of our Dignity above the Brutes, and make us capable to pleaſe, and glorify, and enjoy him. This firſt and fundamental Benefit, upon which all other Favours and Benefits are the Superſtructure, was the Effect from an eternal Cauſe, his moſt free Decree, that ordained our Birth in the ſpaces of Time. The Fountain was his pure Goodneſs; there was no Neceſſity determining his Will, he did not want external declarative Glory, being infinitely happy in himſelf, and there could be no ſuperiour Power to conſtrain him. And that which renders our Maker's Goodneſs more free and obliging, is the Conſidera-

tion he might have created Millions of Men, and left us in our native Nothing, and, as I may ſo ſpeak, loſt and buried in perpetual Darkneſs. Now, what was God's end in making us? Certainly it was becoming his Infinite Unerſtanding, that is, to communicate of his own Divine Fulneſs, and to be actively glorified by intelligent Creatures. Accordingly 'tis the ſolemn Acknowledgment of the Repreſentative Church. *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Glory, and Honour,* Rev. 4. 11. *and Power: For thou haſt created all Things, and for thy Pleaſure they were created.* Who is ſo void of rational Sentiments, as not to acknowledg 'tis our indiſpenſable Dutry, *Our reaſonable Service, to offer up our ſelves an intire living Sacrifice to his Glory?* What is more natural, according to the Laws of uncorrupt Nature, (I might ſay, and of corrupt Nature, for the Heathens practiſed it) than

than that Love ſhould correſpond with Love; as the one deſcends in Benefits, the other ſhould aſcend in Thankfulneſs. As a poliſh'd Looking-glaſs of Steel, ſtrongly reverberates the Beams of the Sun ſhining upon it, without loſing a ſpark of Light, thus the underſtanding Soul ſhould reflect the Affection of Love upon our bleſſed Maker, in Reverence, and Praiſe, and Thankfulneſs. Now Sin breaks all thoſe ſacred Bands of Grace and Gratitude, that engage us to love and obey God. He is the juſt Lord of all our Faculties Intellectual and Senſitive, and the Sinner employs them as Weapons of Unrighteouſneſs againſt him. He preſerves us by his powerful gracious Providence, which is a renewed Creation every Moment, and the Goodneſs he uſes to us, the Sinner abuſes againſt him. This is the moſt unworthy, ſhameful and monſtrous Ingrati-

Ingratitude. This makes forgetful and unthankful Men, more brutiſh than *the dull Ox, and the ſtupid Aſs*, who ſerve thoſe that feed them; nay, ſinks them below the inſenſible part of the Creation, that invariably obſerves the Law and Order preſcribed by the Creator. Aſtoniſhing Degeneracy! *Hear O Heavens, give Ear, O Earth! I have nouriſhed and brought up Children, and they have rebelled againſt me*, was the Complaint of God himſelf. The conſiderate Review of this, will melt us into Tears of Confuſion.

2*dly*. 'Twas the unvaluable Goodneſs of God to give his Law to Man, for his Rule, both in reſpect of the matter of the Law, and his end in giving it.

(1.) The matter of the Law, this, as is forecited from the Apoſtle, *is holy, juſt, and good. It contains all things that are honeſt, and juſt, and pure, and lovely, and of good Report, whatſo-*

whatſoever are vertuous and Praiſe-worthy. In Obedience to it the Innocence and Perfection of the reaſonable Creature conſiſts. This I do but glance upon, having been conſider'd before.

(2.) The end of giving the Law. God was pleas'd upon Man's Creation, by an illuſtrious Revelation to ſhew him his Duty, to *write his Law in his Heart*, that he might not take one ſtep out of the Circle of its Precepts, and immediately ſin and periſh. His gracious Deſign was to keep Man in his Love; that from the Obedience of the reaſonable Creature, the Divine Goodneſs might take its riſe to reward him. This unfeigned and excellent Goodneſs, the Sinner outragiouſly deſpiſes: for what greater Contempt can be expreſt againſt a written Law, than the tearing it in pieces, and trampling it under foot? And this conſtructively the Sinner does

does to the Law of God, which Contempt extends to the gracious Giver of it. *Thus the Commandment that was ordain'd unto Life, by Sin was found unto Death.* Rom. 7. 10.

(3.) Sin is an extream vilifying of God's Goodneſs, in preferring Carnal Pleaſures to his Favour, and Communion with him, wherein the Life, the Felicity, the Heaven of the reaſonable Creature conſiſts. God is Infinite in all poſſible Perfections, All-ſufficient to make us compleatly and eternally happy: he diſdains to have any Competitor, and requires to be ſupream in our Eſteem and Affections: the reaſon of this is ſo evident by Divine and Natural Light, that 'tis needleſs to ſpend many words about it. 'Tis an Obſervation of St. *Auſtin* *, *That it was a Rule amongſt the Heathens, that a wiſe Man ſhould worſhip all their Deities.* The Romans were ſo inſatiable in Idolatry, that they ſent to Foreign

* Omnes Deos colendos eſſe ſapienti. Cur ergo à numero cæterorum ille rejectus eſt? nihil reſtat ut dicant, hujus Dei ſacra recipere noluerint, niſi quia ſolum ſe coli voluerit. *Aug. de Conſenſ. Evang. c.* 17.

Foreign Countries to bring the Gods of ſeveral Nations: an unpoliſh'd Stone, a tame Serpent, that were reputed Deities, they received with great Solemnity and Reverence. But the true God had no Temple, no Worſhip in *Rome*, where there was a *Pantheon* dedicated to the Honour of all the falſe Gods. The Reaſon he gives of it is, that the true God, who alone has Divine Excellencies, and Divine Empire, will be worſhip'd alone, and ſtrictly forbids the Aſſumption of any into his Throne. To adore any beſides him is infinitely debaſing, and provoking to his dread Majeſty. Now Sin in its Nature is a Converſion from God to the Creature; and whatever the Temptation be, in yielding to it, there is ſignified, that we chooſe ſomething before his Favour. Sin is founded *in bono jucundo*, ſomething that is delectable to the Carnal Nature: 'tis the

the univerſal Character of Carnal Men, *They are Lovers of Pleaſure more than Lovers of God.* To ſome, Riches are the moſt alluring Object. The young Man in the Goſpel, when our Saviour commanded *him to give his Eſtate to the Poor, and he ſhould have Treaſure in Heaven, went away ſorrowful*, as if he had been offer'd to his loſs. To others, the Pleaſures that in ſtrict Propriety are ſenſual, are moſt charming. Love is the Weight of the Soul that turns it, not like a dead Weight of the Scales, but with Election freely to its Object: in the carnal Ballance the preſent Things of the World are of conſpicuous Moment, and out-weigh Spiritual and Eternal Bleſſings. Altho the Favour of God be eminently all that can be deſir'd, under the Notion of Riches, or Honour, or Pleaſure, and every Atom of our Affection is due to him; yet Carnal Men think it a cheap

cheap Purchaſe to obtain the good Things of this World, by ſinful means, with the loſs of his Favour. This their Actions declare. Prodigious Folly! as if a few Sparks ſtruck out of a Flint, that can neither afford Light or Warmth, were more deſirable than the Sun in its Brightneſs. And how contumelious and provoking it is to God, he declares in the moſt moving Expreſſions: *Be aſtoniſhed, O ye Heavens at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very deſolate, ſaith the Lord. For my People have committed two Evils; they have forſaken me the Fountain of living Waters, and hewed them out broken Ciſterns that can hold no Water.* Jer. 2. 12, 13. This immediately was charg'd upon the Jews, who ſet up Idols of Jealouſy, and ador'd them, rather than the glorious *Jehovah*: and in proportion 'tis true of all Sinners; for every vicious Affection prefers ſome vain Object, before his Love,

and

and the Enjoyment of his glorious Preſence, that is the Reward of Obedience.

5. The Sinner diſparages the impartial Juſtice of God. In the Divine Law there is a Connexion between Sin and Puniſhment; the Evil of doing and the Evil of ſuffering. This is not a meer Arbitrary Conſtitution, but founded on the inſeparable Deſert of Sin, and the Rectitude of God's Nature, which unchangeably loves Holineſs, and hates Sin. Altho the threatning does not lay a ſtrict neceſſity upon the Lawgiver always to inflict the Puniſhment; yet God having declar'd his equal Laws as the Rule of our Duty, and of his Judgment, if they ſhould be uſually without Effect upon Offenders, the Bands of Government would be diſſolv'd, and conſequently the Honour of his Juſtice ſtain'd both with reſpect to his Nature and Office:

Office: for as an eſſential Attribute 'tis the Correſpondence of his Will and Actions with his Moral Perfections; and as Soveraign Ruler, he is to preſerve Equity and Order in his Kingdom. Now thoſe who voluntarily break his Law, preſume upon Impunity. The firſt rebellious Sin was committed upon this Preſumption: God threatn'd, *If you eat the forbidden Fruit, you ſhall die: the Serpent ſays, Eat, and you ſhall not die*; and aſſenting to the Temptation, *Adam* fell to Diſobedience. And ever ſince Men are fearleſs to ſin upon the ſame Motive. God chargeth the wicked, *Thou thoughteſt* Pſal. 50. *that I was altogether ſuch a one as thy ſelf*; not concern'd to puniſh the Violation of his ſacred Laws. The Sinner commits the Divine Attributes to fight againſt one another, preſuming that Mercy will diſarm Juſtice, and ſtop its terrible Effects upon impenitent obſtinate Sinners:

From hence they become bold and harden'd in the continuance
Deut. 29. 17, 19, 20. of their Sins. *There is a Root that beareth Gall and Wormwood*: and when the Curſe of the Law is declar'd and denounc'd againſt Sin, *the Wicked bleſſeth himſelf in his Heart, ſaying, I ſhall have Peace, tho I walk in the Imagination of my Heart, to add Drunkenneſs to Thirſt.* This caſts ſuch a foul Blemiſh upon the Juſtice of God, that he threatens the ſevereſt Vengeance for it. *The Lord will not ſpare him, but the Anger of the Lord and his Jealouſy ſhall ſmoke againſt that Man, and all the Curſes written in this Book ſhall be upon him, and the Lord ſhall blot out his Name from under*
Pſal. 50. *Heaven. Conſider this ye that forget God, leſt I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.*

6. The Sinner implicitly denies God's Omniſcience. There is ſuch a Turpitude adhering to Sin, that it cannot endure the Light of the Sun,

or

or the Light of Conſcience, but ſeeks to be conceal'd under a Mask of Vertue, or a Vail of Darkneſs. There are very few on this ſide Hell, ſo transform'd into the likeneſs of the Devil, as to be impenetrable by Shame. What is ſaid of the Adulterer and Thief, Sinners of greater Guilt, and deeper Dye, is true in proportion of every Sinner: *If a Mans ſees them, they are in the Terrors of the ſhadow of Death.* Job. Now from whence is it that many, who if they were ſurpriz'd in the actings of their Sins by a Child or a Stranger, would bluſh and tremble, yet altho the holy God ſees all their Sins in order to judg them, and will judg in order to puniſh them, are ſecure without any fearful or ſhameful Apprehenſions of his Preſence? Did they ſtedfaſtly believe that their foul Villanies were open to his piercing, pure and ſevere Eye, they muſt be ſtruck with Terrors,

and cover'd with Confuſion. *Will he force the Queen before my Face?* was the Speech of the King inflam'd with Wrath, and the Prologue of Death againſt the fallen Favourite. Would Men dare to affront God's Authority, and outragiouſly break his Laws before his Face, if they duly conſider'd his Omnipreſence and Obſervance of them? it were impoſſible. And Infidelity is the radical Cauſe of their Inconſideration. It was a falſe Imputation againſt *Job*, but juſtly applied to the Wicked, *Thou ſayeſt, How does God know? can he judg through the dark Cloud? Thick Clouds are a Covering to him, that he ſees not.* And ſuch are introduced by the Pſalmiſt declaring their inward Sentiments: *The Lord ſhall not ſee, neither ſhall the God of* Jacob *regard it.*

Job 22. 13, 14.

Laſtly; The Sinner ſlights the Power of God. This Attribute renders God a dreadful Judg. He has

has a Right to puniſh, and Power to revenge every Tranſgreſſion of his Law. His Judicial Power is ſupreme, his Executive is irreſiſtible. He can with one Stroke diſpatch the Body to the Grave, and the Soul to Hell, and make Men as miſerable as they are ſinful. Yet Sinners as boldly provoke him, as if there were no danger. We read of the infatuated *Syrians*, that they thought that God, the Protector of *Iſrael*, had only *Power on the Hills*, and not *in the Vallies*, and renewed the War to their Deſtruction. Thus Sinners enter into the Liſts with God, and range an Army of Luſts againſt the Armies of Heaven, and blindly bold, run upon their own Deſtruction. They neither believe his All-ſeeing Eye, nor All-mighty Hand. They change the Glory of the living God into a dead Idol, that has Eyes and ſees not, and Hands and handles not; and accordingly

his Threatnings make no Impreſſion upon them.

Thus I have preſented a true View of the Evil of Sin conſider'd in it ſelf: but as *Job* ſaith of God, *How little a Portion of him is known?* may be ſaid of the Evil of Sin, How little of it is known? For in proportion as our Apprehenſions are defective and below the Greatneſs of God, ſo are they of the Evil of Sin, that contradicts his Soveraign, Will and diſhonours his excellent Perfections.

SER-

SERMON II.

Geneſis xxxix. 9.

How can I do this great Wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?

2. I ſhall proceed to conſider the Evil of Sin relatively to us, and prove it to be moſt pernicious and deſtructive. If we compare it with Temporal Evils, it preponderates all that Men are liable to in the preſent World. Diſeaſes in our Bodies, Diſaſters in our Eſtates, Diſgrace in our Reputation, are in juſt Eſteem far leſs Evil than the Evil of Sin: for that corrupts and deſtroys our more excellent and immortal Part. The *vile Body* is of no account in compariſon of *the precious Soul*. Therefore the Apoſtle enforces his Exhortation, *Dearly*

beloved Brethren, abſtain from fleſhly Luſts, that war againſt the Soul. The Iſſue of this War is infinitely more woful, than of the moſt cruel againſt our Bodies and Goods, our Liberties and Lives: for our Eſtates and Freedom, if loſt, may be recover'd; if the preſent Life be loſt for the Cauſe of God, it ſhall be reſtor'd in greater Luſtre and Perfection; but if the Soul be loſt, 'tis loſt for ever.

All Temporal Evils are conſiſtent with the Love of God: *Job* on the Dunghil, roughcaſt with Ulcers, was moſt precious in God's ſight: *Lazarus* in the loweſt Poverty, and waſted with loathſome Sores, was dear to his Affections; a Guard of Angels was ſent to convoy his departing Soul to the Divine Preſence. *But Sin ſeparates between God and us*, who is the Fountain of Felicity, and the Center of Reſt to the Soul.

Other

Other Evils God, who is our wiſe and compaſſionate Father and Phyſician, makes uſe of, as Medicinal Preparations for the Cure of Sin: and certainly the Diſeaſe which would be the Death of the Soul, is worſe than the Remedy, tho never ſo bitter and afflicting to Senſe.

Sin is an Evil of that Malignity, that the leaſt degree of it is fatal. If it be conceiv'd in the Soul, tho not actually finiſh'd, 'tis deadly. One Sin corrupted in an inſtant Angelical Excellencies, and turn'd the glorious Spirits of Heaven into Devils. 'Tis Poiſon ſo ſtrong, that the firſt Taſte of it ſhed a deadly Taint and Malignity into the Veins of all Mankind.

Sin is ſuch an exceeding Evil, that 'tis the ſevereſt Puniſhment Divine Juſtice inflicts on Sinners on this ſide Hell. The giving *Men over to the Power of their Luſts*, is the moſt fearful Judgment, not only with reſpect

reſpect to the Cauſe, God's unrelenting and unquenchable Anger, and the Iſſue, everlaſting Deſtruction, but in the quality of the Judgment. Nay, did Sin appear as odious in our Eyes as it does in God's, we ſhould account it the worſt part of Hell it ſelf, the Pollutions of the Damned to be an Evil exceeding the Torments ſuperadded to them.

Sin is pregnant with all kinds of Evils, the Seeds of it are big with Judgments. The Evils that are obvious to Senſe, or that are Spiritual and Inward, Temporal and Eternal Evils, all proceed from Sin, often as the Natural Cauſe, and always as the Meritorious. And many times the ſame Puniſhment is produc'd by the Efficiency of Sin, as well as inflicted for its Guilt. Thus Uncleanneſs, without the miraculous Waters of Jealouſy, rots the Body, and the Pleaſure of Sin

is

is revenged by a loathſom conſuming Diſeaſe, the natural Conſequence of it. Thus Intemperance and Luxury ſhorten the Lives of Men, and accelerate Damnation. Fierce Deſires, and wild Rage are Fewel for the everlaſting Fire in Hell. The ſame Evils conſidered Phyſically, are from the Efficiency of Sin; conſider'd legally, are from the Guilt of Sin, and the Juſtice of God.

This being a Point of great Uſefulneſs, that I may be more inſtructive, I will conſider the Evils that are conſequential to Sin, under theſe two Heads.

Firſt, Such as proceed immediately from it by Emanation.

Secondly; Thoſe Evils, and all other as the Effects of God's Juſtice and Sentence.

Firſt,

Firſt, The Evils that proceed immediately by Emanation from it: and tho ſome of them are not reſented with feeling Apprehenſions by Sinners, yet they are of a fearful Nature. Sin has deprived Man of the Purity, Nobility, and Peace of his innocent State.

1. It has ſtain'd and tainted him with an univerſal, intimate and permanent Pollution. Man in his firſt Creation was holy and righteous: a Beam of Beauty derived from Heaven was ſhed upon his Soul, in compariſon of which, ſenſitive Beauty is but as the Clearneſs of Glaſs, to the Luſtre of a Diamond. His Underſtanding *was Light in the Lord*, his Will and Affections were regular and pure, the Divine Image was impreſt upon all his Faculties, that attracted the Love and Complaceney of God himſelf. Sin has blotted out all his amiable Excellencies, and ſuperinduc'd

induc'd the moſt foul Deformity, the Original of which was fetch'd from Hell. Sinners are the natural Children of Satan, of a near Reſemblance to him. The Scripture borrows Compariſons to repreſent the defiling Quality of Sin, from Pollutions that are moſt loathſom to our Senſes: *from peſtilential Ulcers, putrifying Sores, filthy Vomit, and defiling Mire.* This Pollution is univerſal through the whole Man, *Spirit, Soul and Body.* It darkens the Mind, our ſupream Faculty, with a Cloud of Corruption; it depraves the Will, and vitiates the Affections. 'Tis a Pollution ſo deep and permanent, that the Deluge that ſwept away a World of Sinners, did not waſh away their Sins: and the Fire at the laſt Day, that ſhall devour the Droſs of the viſible World, and renew the Heavens and the Earth, ſhall not purge away the Sins of the guilty Inhabitants.

bitants. This Pollution hath ſo defil'd and disfigur'd Man, who was a fair and lovely Type, wherein the Skill and Perfections of the Creator was conſpicuous, *that it repented God that he made Man.* As an Artificer having form'd a ſurprizing Piece, either a Statue or Picture, wherein Art almoſt equall'd the Life and Luſtre of Nature; if it be torn or broken, throws it from his ſight with ſorrow, impatient to ſee it ſo rudely defaced: Thus God is ſaid *to hide his Face from Sinners,* to expreſs his Diſpleaſure, as unwilling to behold the Diſparagement of his Maſter-piece, the excellent Product of his Wiſdom and Power.

2. Sin has degraded Man from his native State and Dignity. Man by his Extraction and Deſcent was *the Son of God, a little lower than the Angels,* conſecrated and crowned, as a Prieſt for the Service and Communion

munion with his glorious Maker, and as King over the World. *But being in Honour, he underſtood not his Dignity, his Duty and Felicity, and became like the Beaſts that periſh.* By his Rebellion againſt his Creator, he made a Forfeiture of his Dominion, and loſt the Obedience of ſenſible Creatures, and the Service of Inſenſible; which I only mention, and ſhall reſtrain my Conſideration, to ſhew how he is become like the Beaſts, as an Effect reſulting from his Sin. He is deveſted of his white Robe of Innocence, and his nobleſt Perfections, Reaſon and Religion. Senſe and Imagination, the leading Faculties in Brutes, are his Rulers: The rational governing Powers of Man, have loſt their ſuperior Sway, and the Carnal Paſſions rove without Reins to forbidden Objects. The lower Appetites are predominant, which is the moſt ignominious and cruel

cruel Servitude wherein Human Liberty can be intangled and fetter'd. His Underſtanding and Will, that were capable of taking a flight for the Diſcovery and Fruition of Celeſtial and Eternal Things, are debaſed, and limited to ſenſual periſhing Things, and derive vilifying Qualities from them. *He is Earthly-minded*; his Aims, Contrivances, Deſires are faſtened to the Earth: the Divine Spark within him is cover'd under Aſhes. *He is carnally minded*, always ſtudying and making *Proviſions for the Fleſh*. This is a viler Debaſement, than if the Counſellors of State were employed in the ſordid Offices of the Kitchin or Stable. Nay, 'tis a Diminution below the Rank of Beaſts, for by Nature they are uncapable of directing their Eyes and Deſires towards Heaven; but Man is Brutiſh by his voluntary Sin. To ſee the Head of a rapacious Wolf, or fierce

fierce Tyger, or luſtful Horſe joined to the Body of a Man, how monſtrous would it appear? But 'tis more unnatural and ignominious, for Men, in whom Reaſon and Religion ſhould govern, to reſemble them in the Brutiſh Appetites of Luſt and Rage; for there is a nearer Affinity between the Body of a Man and of a Beaſts, that agree in the common ſenſible Nature, than between the Immortal Spirit of a Man, and the Beaſts that periſh. In ſhort, Sin has enſlaved Men to Satan an Infernal Fiend: *They are taken Captives by him at his Pleaſure*: And, which is the loweſt *Degradation*, *they are the Servants of Corruption.*

3. Sin has broke the ſweet Peace and bleſſed Concord in the Soul, the Felicity of our innocent State. Peace is the Tranquillity that reſults from Order and Unity. In Man there was a regular Harmony of all

his Faculties; the Affections were conſonant with his Will, his Will with his Underſtanding, and his Underſtanding with the Law of God. This was the inward State of his Soul in his Creation; for having a derived Being, it was natural and neceſſary, that he ſhould be appointed to his End, and receive his Rule for the obtaining it, from the Underſtanding and Will of his Maker. Now whilſt there was a Correſpondence in his Faculties, and their Operations with his Rule and End, the Will of God, and the Glory of God, the Reſult of it, as well as the Reward of it, was Spiritual Peace with God, Internal Peace with himſelf, External Peace with others. Now Sin has diſſolved this Unity, violated this ſacred Order: And from hence,

(1.) Peace with God, that conſiſted in his Favour and Friendſhip to us, and our Filial Dependance upon

upon him, which is the Spring of full and ſatisfying Joy, is broke. God appears a fearful Enemy againſt the Sinners; the penal Effects of his Wrath, I ſhall ſpeak of diſtinctly under the ſecond General: And that Divine Calm in the Conſcience, that Peace joyn'd with the pureſt Pleaſure, that was the Reflex of God's Favour on the Soul, is changed into anxious Apprehenſions of his juſt Power to puniſh us. Guilt generates Fear, and Fear Hatred, and both cauſe a woful flight from God.

(2.) Internal Peace is broke by Sin. Whilſt the Paſſions were ſubordinate to the Empire of Reaſon, and in Accord among themſelves, there was a perfect Peace; but Sin has raiſed an inteſtine War in Man's Breaſt. *The Law of the Members rebels againſt the Law of the Mind*: for there is no Man ſo prodigiouſly wicked, and ſpoil'd of his Primi-

tive Endowments, but ſtill there remains ſome Principles of Morality in the Mind, ſo that his Conſcience diſcovers and condemns the Vices he allows and practiſes, which makes the Sinner uneaſy to himſelf, and mixes Vinegar with his Wine. Beſides, ſince the Paſſions are diſbanded, into what Confuſion is Man fallen? How various, how violent are they, and often repugnant to one another? How often do we change their Habits and Scenes in a day? Sometimes we are vainly merry, and then as vainly ſad; ſometimes deſirous, and then averſe; and with reſpect to our ſelves, ſometimes pleaſed, ſometimes vex'd, ſometimes amiable, and ſometimes odious; we are more mutable than the Planet that is the Emblem of Inconſtancy. How often do Clouds of Melancholy darken the bright Serenity of the Spirit, and caſt a dreadful Gloom over

Prima hæc eſt ultio, quod ſe judice nemo nocens abſolvit.

over it? How oft do Storms of Paſſion diſturb its Tranquillity? The Breaſt of Man, that was the Temple of Peace, is become a Den of Dragons; every exorbitant Affection tears and torments him. 'Tis true, this is alſo a penal Effect from Divine Juſtice: *There is no Peace ſaith my God to the Wickd*: With which that Saying of St. *Auſtin* is conſonant, *Juſſit Domine, & ſic eſt, omnis inordinatus affectus eſt ſibi pœna.*

(3.) Sin has broke our Agreement with one another. When there was a regular Conſent between the ſuperiour and lower Faculties in all Men, they were in Unity among themſelves, for they were perfectly alike. But the tumultuous and tyrannical Paſſions have engaged them in mortal Enmity. 'Tis the account St. *James* gives, *From whence come Wars and Fightings among you? Come they not*

hence, even of your Luſts, that war in your Members? Sin kindles and blows the Fire of Diſcord, in Families, Cities, Kingdoms: Sin is the Fury that brings a ſmoaking Firebrand from Hell, and ſets the World into Combuſtion. Ambition, Avarice, the greedy Deſires of Rule and Revenge, have made the World a Stage of not feigned, but the moſt bloody Tragedies. In this Men are not like, but worſe than the Beaſts: for the fierceſt Beaſts of *Africa* or *Hyrcania*, have a reſpect for their own Likeneſs: tho they devour others, yet they ſpare thoſe of their own kind: but Men are ſo degenerate as to be moſt cruel againſt their Brethren. Theſe are ſome of the Evils that proceed from Sin as their natural Cauſe. And from hence 'tis evident, that Sin makes Men miſerable, were there no Hell of Torment to receive them in the next State.

Secondly;

Secondly; I will conſider the Evils conſequent to Sin, as the Penal Effects of the Sentence againſt Sin; of Divine Juſtice that decrees it, and Divine Power that inflicts it: and in theſe the Sinner is often an active Inſtrument of his own Miſery.

1. The Fall of the Angels is the firſt and moſt terrible Puniſhment of Sin. *God ſpared not the Angels that ſinned, but caſt them down to Hell, reſerved in Chains of Darkneſs to Judgment.* How are they fallen? from what height of Glory and Felicity into bottomleſs Perdition? How are they continually rack'd and tormented with the Remembrance of their loſt Happineſs? If a thouſand of the prime Nobility of a Nation were executed in a day, by the Sentence of a righteous King, we ſhould conclude their Crimes to be *atrocious*: innumerable Angels, dignified *with the Titles of*

Dominions and Principalities, were expell'd from Heaven, their native Seat, and the Sanctuary of Life, and are dead to all the joyful Operations of the intellectual Nature, and only alive to Everlasting Pain.

One Sin of Pride or Envy, brought this terrible Vengeance; from whence we may infer, how provoking Sin is to the holy God. We read of King *Uzziah*, *that upon his Presumption to offer Incense, he was struck with a Leprosy, and the Priests thrust him out, and himself hasted to go out of the Temple*: a Representation of the Punishment of the Angels: by Presumption they were struck with a Leprosy, and justly expelled from the Celestial Temple; and not being able to sustain the Terrors of the Divine Majesty, they fled from his Presence. 'Tis said, *God cast them down, and they left their own Habitation.*

2. Con-

2. Conſider the Penal Effects of Sin with reſpect to Man. They are comprehended in the Sentence of Death, the firſt and ſecond Death, threaten'd to deter *Adam* from tranſgreſſing the Law.

In the firſt Creation Man while innocent was immortal: for altho his Body was compounded of jarring Elements, that had a natural Tendency to Diſſolution, yet the Soul was endowed with ſuch Vertue, as to imbalm the Body alive, and to preſerve it from the leaſt degree of Putrefaction. But when Man by his voluntary Sin was ſeparated from the *Fountain of Life*, the Soul loſt its derivative Life from God, and the active Life infuſed by its Union into the Body. It cannot preſerve the natural Life beyond its limited Term. A righteous Retaliation. Thus the Apoſtle tells us, *Sin came into the World, and Death by Sin.* Even Infants who never

never committed Sin, die, having been conceived in Sin. And Death brought in its Retinue Evils ſo numerous and various, that their kinds are more than words to name and diſtinguiſh them. *Man that is born of a Woman, is of few days, and full of Trouble*: at his Birth he enters into a Labyrinth of Thorns, this miſerable World, and his Life is a continual turning in it: he cannot eſcape being ſometimes prick'd and torn; and at going out of it, his Soul is rent from the Embraces of the Body. 'Tis as poſſible to tell the number of the Waves in a tempeſtuous Sea, as to recount all the tormenting Paſſions of the Soul, all the Diſeaſes of the Body, which far exceed in number all the unhappy Parts wherein they are ſeated. What an afflicting Object would it be, to hear all the mournful Lamentations, all the piercing Complaints, all the deep Groans from the miſe-

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rable in this preſent State? What a proſpect of Terror, to ſee Death in its various Shapes, by Famine, by Fire, by Sword, and by waſting or painful Diſeaſes, triumphant over all Mankind? What a ſight of Woe, to have all the Graves and Charnel-houſes open'd, and ſo many loathſom Carcaſes, or heaps of dry naked Bones, the Trophies of Death, expos'd to view? Such are the afflicting and the deſtructive Effects of Sin. *For Wickedneſs burns as a Fire: it devours the Briars and Thorns.*

Beſides other Miſeries in this Life, ſometimes the Terrors of an accuſing Conſcience ſeize upon Men, which of all Evils are moſt heavy and overwhelming. *Solomon* who underſtood the Frame of Humane Nature, tells us, *The Spirit of a Man can bear his Infirmity*: that is, the Mind fortified by Principles of moral Counſel and Conſtancy, can endure

dure the Aſſault of external Evils: *but a wounded Spirit who can bear?* This is moſt inſupportable when the Sting and Remorſe of the Mind is from the Senſe of Guilt: for then God appears an Enemy righteous and ſevere; and who can encounter with offended Omnipotence? Such is the ſharpneſs of his Sword, and the weight of his Hand, that every Stroke is deadly inward. Satan the cruel Enemy of Souls, exaſperates the Wound. He diſcovers and charges Sin upon the Conſcience, with all its killing Aggravations, and conceals the Divine Mercy, the only Lenitive and healing Balm to the wounded Spirit. What Viſions of Horror, what Spectacles of Fear, what Scenes of Sorrow are preſented to the diſtracted Mind by the Prince of Darkneſs? And which heightens the Miſery, Man is a worſe Enemy to himſelf than Satan: he falls upon his own Sword, and

and deſtroys himſelf. Whatever he ſees or hears, afflicts him; whatever he thinks, torments him. The guilty Conſcience *turns the Sun into Darkneſs, and the Moon into Blood*: the precious Promiſes of the Goſpel, that aſſure Favour and Pardon to returning and relenting Sinners, are turn'd into Arguments of Deſpair, by reflecting upon the abuſe and provocation of Mercy, and that the Advocate in God's Boſom is become the Accuſer. Doleful State! beyond the Conception of all, but thoſe who are plung'd into it. How often do they run to the Grave for Sanctuary, and ſeek for Death as a Deliverance?

Yet all theſe Anxieties and Terrors are but the beginning of Sorrows: for the full and terrible Recompences of Sin ſhall follow the Eternal Judgment pronounc'd againſt the Wicked at the laſt Day. 'Tis true, the Sentence of the Law

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is paſt againſt the Sinner in this preſent State, and Temporal Evils are the Effects of it; but that Sentence is revokable: at Death the Sentence is ratified by the Judg upon every impenitent Sinner; 'tis deciſive of his State, and involves him under Puniſhment for ever: But the full Execution of Judgment ſhall not be till the publick general Sentence pronounc'd by the everlaſting Judg, before the whole World. It exceeds the compaſs of created Thoughts to underſtand fully the direful Effects of Sin in the Eternal State: *For who knows the Power of God's Wrath?* The Scripture repreſents the Puniſhment in Expreſſions, that may inſtruct the Mind, and terrify the Imagination: that may work upon the Principles of Reaſon and Senſe, by which Men are naturally and ſtrongly moved.

1. Sinners ſhall be excluded from Communion with the bleſſed God in

in Heaven, *in whoſe Preſence is Fulneſs of Joy, and at whoſe Right-hand are Pleaſures for evermore.* In the clear and transforming Viſion of his Glory, and the intimate and indiſſolvable Union with him by Love, conſiſts the Perfection and Satisfaction of the immortal Soul. The Felicity reſulting from it, is ſo entire and eternal, as God is great and true, who has ſo often promis'd it to his Saints. Now Sin ſeparates loſt Souls for ever from the reviving Preſence of God. Who can declare the Extent and Degrees of that Evil? for an Evil riſes in proportion to the Good of which it deprives us: it muſt therefore follow, that Celeſtial Bleſſedneſs being tranſcendent, the Excluſion from it is proportionably evil: And as the Felicity of the Saints reſults both from the direct Poſſeſſion of Heaven, and from compariſon with the contrary State: ſo the Miſery

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of the Damned ariſes, both from the Thoughts of loſt Happineſs, and from the laſting Pain that torments them.

But it may be replied, If this be the utmoſt Evil that is conſequent to Sin, the threatning of it is not likely to deter but few from pleaſing their corrupt Appetites: for carnal Men have ſuch groſs Apprehenſions, and vitiated Affections, that they are careleſs of Spiritual Glory and Joy. *They cannot taſte and ſee how good the Lord is*: nay, the Divine Preſence would be a Torment to them: For as Light is the moſt pleaſant Quality in the World to the ſound Eye, ſo 'tis very afflicting and painful to the Eye when corrupted by a Suffuſion of Humours.

To this a clear Anſwer may be given: In the next State where the Wicked ſhall for ever be without thoſe ſenſual Objects which here deceive

ceive and delight them, their Apprehenſions will be changed; they ſhall underſtand what a Happineſs the Fruition of the bleſſed God is, and what a Miſery to be uncapable of enjoying him, and expell'd from the Celeſtial Paradiſe. Our Saviour tells the Infidel Jews, *There ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of Teeth,* Luke 15: 28. *when ye ſhall ſee* Abraham, *and* Iſaac, *and* Jacob, *and all the Prophets in the Kingdom of God, and you your ſelves ſhut out.* How will they pine with Envy at the ſight of that Triumphant Felicity of which they ſhall never be Partakers? *Depart from me,* will be as terrible a part of the Judgment, *as Eternal Fire.*

2. God's Juſtice is not ſatisfied in depriving them of Heaven, but inflicts the moſt heavy Puniſhment upon Senſe and Conſcience in the Damned: for as the Soul and Body in their State of Union in this Life, were both guilty, the one as the

Guide, the other as the Inſtrument of Sin; ſo 'tis equal, when re-united, they ſhould feel the Penal Effects of it. The Scripture repreſents both to our Capacity, *by the Worm that never dies, and the Fire that ſhall never be quenched*: and *by the deſtroying of Body and Soul in Hell-Fire.* Sinners ſhall then be tormented, wherein they were moſt delighted: they ſhall be inveſted with thoſe Objects, that will cauſe the moſt dolorous Perceptions in their ſenſitive Faculties. *The Lake of Fire and Brimſtone, the Blackneſs of Darkneſs*, are words of a terrible Signification, and intended to awaken Sinners to fly *from the Wrath to come.* But no words can fully reveal the terrible Ingredients of their Miſery: the Puniſhment will be in proportion to the Glory of God's Majeſty that is diſhonour'd and provok'd by Sin, and extent of his Power. And as the Soul was the Principal, and the Body

Body but an Acceſſary in the Works of Sin; ſo its capacious Faculties will be far more tormented, than the more limited Faculties of the outward Senſes. The fiery Attributes of God ſhall be tranſmitted through the Glaſs of Conſcience, and concenter'd upon damned Spirits: the Fire without them is not ſo tormenting as this Fire within them. How will the tormenting Paſſions be inflam'd? What Rancor, Reluctance and Rage againſt the Power above that ſentenc'd them to Hell? What Impatience and Indignation againſt themſelves for their wilful Sins, the juſt Cauſe of it? How will they curſe their Creation, and wiſh their utter Extinction, as the final Remedy of their Miſery? But all their ardent Wiſhes are in vain: for the Guilt of Sin will never be expiated, nor God ſo far reconcil'd as to annihilate them. As long as there is Juſtice

in Heaven, and Fire in Hell, as long as God and Eternity ſhall continue, they muſt ſuffer theſe Torments, which the Strength and Patience of an Angel cannot bear one hour. From hence we may infer, what an inconceiveable Evil there is in Sin, and how hateful it is to the moſt High, when God *who is Love*, who is *ſtiled the Father of Mercies*, has prepared and does inflict ſuch Plagues for ever for the Tranſgreſſion of his holy Laws: and ſuch is the Equity of his Judgment, that he never puniſhes Offenders above their Deſert.

I ſhall now apply this Doctrine, by reflecting the Light of it upon our Minds and Hearts.

1. This diſcovers how perverſe and depraved the Minds and Wills of Men are, *to chuſe Sin rather than Affliction*, and break the Divine Law for the obtaining Temporal Things.

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If one with an attentive Eye regards the generality of Mankind, what Dominion preſent and ſenſible Things have over them, how ſecurely and habitually they ſin in proſecution of their Carnal Aims, as if the Soul ſhould not ſurvive the Body, as if there were no Tribunal above to examine, no Judg to ſentence and puniſh Sinners; if he has not Marble Bowels, it will excite his Compaſſion or Indignation. What Compariſon is there between the good Things of this World, and of the next in Degrees or Duration? Aiery Honour, Senſual Pleaſures, and Worldly Riches, are but the thin Appearances of Happineſs, Shadows in Maſquerade, that cannot afford ſolid Content to an immortal Spirit: the Bleſſedneſs of Heaven repleniſhes with everlaſting Satisfaction. What Proportion is there between the *light and momentary Afflictions here*, and a vaſt Eternity

fill'd with Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguiſh, and deſperate Sorrow? What ſtupid Beaſt, what Monſter of a Man, would prefer a ſuperficial tranſient Delight, the Pleaſure of a ſhort Dream, before ever-ſatisfying Joys? Or to avoid a ſlight Evil, venture upon Deſtruction? Yet this is the true Caſe of Sinners: if they can obtain the World with the loſs of Heaven, they count it a valuable Purchaſe; if they can compound ſo, as to eſcape Temporal Troubles, tho involved under Guilt that brings extream and eternal Miſery, they think it a ſaving Bargain. Amazing Folly! Either they believe or do not, the Recompences in the future State: if they do not, how unaccountable is their Impiety? If they do, 'tis more prodigious they do not *feel the Powers of the World to come*, ſo as to regulate their Lives, and controul the ſtrongeſt Temptations

tions to ſin againſt God. A wicked Believer is more guilty than a wicked Infidel. How could we conceive it poſſible, were it not viſible in their Actions, that Men who have judicative Faculties to compare and diſtinguiſh things, and accordingly be moved with Deſires or Fears, ſhould with ardent Affections purſue deſpicable Vanities, and neglect ſubſtantial Happineſs, and be fearful of the Shadows of Dangers, and intrepid in the midſt of the trueſt Dangers! He is a deſperate Gameſter that will venture a Crown at a Throw, againſt ſome petty Advantage: yet this is really done by Sinners who hazard the loſs of Heaven for this World: they hang by ſlender Strings, a little Breath that expires every moment, over bottomleſs Perdition, and are inſenſible, without any palpitation of Heart, any ſign of Fear.

How ſtrong is the Deluſion and Concupiſcence of the carnally-minded? The Luſts of the Fleſh bribe and corrupt their Underſtandings, or divert them from ſerious Conſideration of their Ways, and the Iſſues of them. From hence it is they are preſently entangled and vanquiſh'd by ſenſual Temptations; they are cozen'd by the Colours of Good and Evil, and Satan eaſily accompliſhes his moſt pernicious and envious Deſign, to make Men miſerable as himſelf. How juſt is the Reproach of Wiſdom, *How long ye ſimple ones will ye love Simplicity, and Fools hate Knowledg?* The Light of Reaſon and Revelation ſhines upon them, they have not the excuſe of Ignorance, but the righteous and heavy *Condemnation of thoſe who love Darkneſs rather than Light, becauſe their Deeds are evil.* 'Tis no mean degree of Guilt to extenuate Sin, and make an Apology for Sinners,

ners. The wiſeſt of Men tells us, *Fools make a mock of Sin*: they count it a fond Niceneſs, a ſilly Preciſeneſs to be fearful of offending God. They boaſt of their deceitful Arts and Inſinuations, whereby they repreſent Sin as a light matter, to corrupt others. But 'tis infinitely better to be defective in the Subtilty of the Serpent, than in the Innocence of the Dove. A meer Natural, who is only capable of ſenſitive Actions, and is diſtinguiſh'd from a Brute by his ſhape, is not ſuch a forlorn Sot, as the ſinful Fool. What the Prophet *Jeremy* ſpeaks of one who gets Riches unjuſtly, that he ſhall leave them, and *in the end die a Fool*, will be verified of the wilful obſtinate Sinner: in the end he ſhall by the terrible Conviction of his own Mind, be found guilty of the moſt woful Folly: and how many have acknowledged in their laſt hours, when uſually Men ſpeak with

with the moſt feeling and leaſt Affectation, how have they in words of the Pſalmiſt arraigned themſelves, *So fooliſh have we been, and like Beaſts before thee?*

2. From hence we may be inſtructed of the wonderful Patience of God, who bears with a World of Sinners, that are obnoxious to his Juſtice, and under his Power every day. If we conſider the number and aggravations of Mens Sins, how many have out-told the Hairs of their Heads in actual Tranſgreſſions; how mighty and manifeſt their Sins are, that the Deity and Providence are queſtioned for the ſuſpending of Vengeance? And yet that God notwithſtanding all their enormous Injuries, and violent Provocations, is patient towards Sinners, it cannot but fill us with Admiration. His Mercy, like the cheerful Light of the Sun, viſits us every Morning with its

its benign Influences; his Juſtice, like Thunder, rarely ſtrikes the Wicked. He affords not only the Supports of Life, but many Comforts and Refreſhments to the unthankful and rebellious.

'Tis not from any Defect in his Power that they are not conſum'd, but from the Abundance of his Mercy. He made the World without any ſtrain of his Power, and can as eaſily deſtroy it: he has an innumerable Company of Angels attending his Commands; and every Angel is an Army in ſtrength: one of them deſtroyed an hundred and fourſcore and five thouſand in a Night. He can uſe the moſt deſpicable and weakeſt Creatures, Frogs, and Lice, and Flies, as Inſtruments of Vengeance to ſubdue the proudeſt *Pharaoh*, the moſt obſtinate Rebels.— He ſees Sin where-ever it is, and hates it where-ever he ſees it; yet his Patience endures

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their crying Sins, and his long-Suffeing expects their Repentance. *The Lord is not ſlack, as ſome Men count ſlackneſs, but he is long-ſuffering to us-ward, not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to Repentance.* He ſpares Sinners with ſuch Indulgence, in order to their Salvation. 'Tis deſervedly one of his Royal Titles, *The God of Patience.* Our fierce Spirits are apt to take Fire and Revenge for every Injury real, or ſuppos'd; but the great God, who is infinitely ſenſible of all the Indignities offer'd to his Majeſty, *defers his Anger, and loads them with his Benefits every day.* What is more aſtoniſhing than *the Riches of his Goodneſs*, unleſs it be the perverſe Abuſe of it by Sinners, to harden themſelves in their Impieties? But altho his Clemency delays the Puniſhment, the Sacredneſs and Conſtancy of his Juſtice will not forget it: *when Patience has had its perfect work*, Juſtice ſhall

ſhall have a ſolemn Triumph in the final Deſtruction of impenitent unreformed Sinners.

3. The Conſideration of the Evil of Sin, ſo great in it ſelf, and pernicious to us, heightens our Obligations to the Divine Mercy, in ſaving *us from our Sins*, and an everlaſting Hell, the juſt Puniſhment of them. Our Loſs was unvaluable, our Miſery extream, and without infinite Mercy, we had been under an unremediable neceſſity of ſinning and ſuffering for ever. God ſaw us in this wretched and deſperate State, *and his Eye affected his Heart, in his Pity he redeemed* and reſtored us. This is the cleareſt Teſtimony of pure Goodneſs: for God did not want external Glory, who is infinitely happy in his own Perfections: he could, when Man revolted from his Duty, have created a new World of innocent Creatures: for infinite Power is not

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ſpent nor leſſened by finite Productions, but his undeſerved and undeſired Mercy appeared in our Salvation. The way of accompliſhing it, renders Mercy more illuſtrious: for to glorify his Juſtice, and preſerve the Honour of his Holineſs unblemiſh'd, he laid upon his Son *the Iniquity of us all.* This was Love that paſſeth all Underſtanding: Our Saviour ſpeaks of it with Admiration; *God ſo loved the World,* and hated Sin, *that he gave his only begotten Son to die for it; that whoſoever believes in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.*

And how dear are our Engagements to Jeſus Chriſt? The Judg would not releaſe the Guilty without a Ranſom, nor the Surety without Satisfaction; and the Son of God moſt compaſſionately and willingly gave his precious Blood to obtain our Deliverance. If his Perfections were not moſt amiable

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and raviſhing, yet that he died for us, ſhould infinitely endear him to us. *To thoſe who believe, he is precious*: to thoſe who have felt their undone Condition, and that by his Merits and Mediation, are reſtored to the Favour of God, he is eminently precious. Who can break *the Conſtraints of ſuch Love?* If there be a ſpark of Reaſon, or a grain of unfeigned Faith in us, *We muſt judg, that if one died for all, then all were dead; and thoſe that live, ſhould live to his Glory, who died for their Salvation.*

Add to this, that in the Sufferings of Chriſt there is the cleareſt Demonſtration of the Evil of Sin, and how hateful it is to God, if we conſider the Dignity of his Perſon, the Greatneſs of his Sufferings, and the innocent Recoilings of his Human Nature from ſuch fearful Sufferings. He was the Eternal Son of God, the Heir of his

his Father's Love and Glory, the Lord of Angels; he ſuffered in his Body the moſt ignominious and painful Death, being nail'd to the Croſs in the ſight of the World: The Sufferings of his Soul were incomparably more afflicting: For tho heavenly meek, he endured the Deriſion and cruel Violence of his Enemies with a ſilent Patience; yet in the dark Eclipſe of his Father's Countenance, in the deſolate ſtate of his Soul, *the Lamb of God opened his Mouth* in that mournful Complaint, *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* His innocent Nature did ſo recoil from thoſe fearful Sufferings, that with repeated Ardency of Affection, he deprecated that bitter Cup; *Abba, Father, all things are poſſible to Thee; let this Cup paſs me:* He addreſs'd to the Divine Power and Love, the Attributes that relieve the Miſerable, yet he drank off the Dregs

Dregs of the Cup of God's Wrath. Now we may from hence conclude, how great an Evil Sin is, that could not be expiated by a meaner Sacrifice, *than the offering up the Soul of Chriſt* to atone incenſed Juſtice; and no lower a Price, than the Blood of the Son of God, the moſt unvaluable Treaſure, could ranſom Men who were devoted to Deſtruction.

4. The Conſideration of the Evil of Sin in it ſelf and to us, ſhould excite us with a holy Circumſpection to keep our ſelves from being defiled with it. 'Tis our indiſpenſable Duty, our tranſcendent Intereſt to obey the Divine Law entirely and conſtantly. The Tempter cannot preſent any Motives, that to a rectified Mind are ſufficient to induce a Conſent to Sin, and offend God. Let the Scales be even, and put into one all the Delights of the Senſes, all the Pleaſures and Ho-

nours of the World, which are the Elements of Carnal Felicity, how light are they againſt the Enjoyment of the bleſſed God in Glory? Will the Gain of this periſhing World, compenſate the loſs of the Soul and Salvation for ever? If there were any poſſible Compariſon between empty deluding Vanities, and Celeſtial Happineſs, the Choice would be more difficult, and the Miſtake leſs culpable; but they vaniſh into nothing in the Compariſon: ſo that to commit the leaſt Sin that makes us liable to the forfeiture of Heaven, for *the Pleaſures of Sin that are but for a ſeaſon*, is Madneſs in that degree, that no words can expreſs. Suppoſe the Tempter inſpires his Rage into his Slaves, and tries to conſtrain us to Sin by Perſecution; how unreaſonable is it to be diſmayed at the Threatnings of Men, *who muſt die*, and who can only touch

touch the Body; and to *deſpiſe the Terrors of the Lord*, who lives for ever, and can puniſh for ever? Methinks we ſhould look upon the perverted raging World, as a Swarm of angry Flies, that may diſquiet, but cannot hurt us. *Socrates*, when unrighteouſly proſecuted to Death, ſaid of his Enemies, with a Courage becoming the Breaſt of a Chriſtian, *They may kill me, but cannot hurt me.* How ſhould theſe Conſiderations raiſe in us an invincible Reſolution and Reluctancy againſt the Tempter, in all his Approaches and Addreſſes to us? *And that we may ſo reſiſt him, as to cauſe his flight from us*, let us imitate the excellent Saint, whoſe Example is ſet before us.

(1.) By poſſeſſing the Soul with a lively and ſolemn Senſe of God's Preſence, who is the Inſpector and Judg of all our Actions. *Joſeph* repell'd the Temptation with this

powerful Thought, *How ſhall I ſin againſt God? The Fear of the Lord is clean*; 'tis a watchful Sentinel, that reſiſts Temptations without, and ſuppreſſes Corruptions within: 'Tis like the Cherubim plac'd with a flaming Sword in Paradiſe, to prevent the Re-entry of *Adam* when guilty and polluted. For this end we muſt, by frequent and ſerious Conſiderations, repreſent the Divine Being and Glory in our Minds, that there may be a gracious Conſtitution of Soul; this will be our Preſervative from Sin: for altho the habitual Thoughts of God are not always in act, yet upon a Temptation they are preſently excited, and appear in the view of Conſcience, and are effectual to make us reject the Tempter with Defiance and Indignation.

This holy Fear is not a meer judicial Impreſſion, that reſtrains from Sin, for the dreadful Puniſhment that

that follows; for that ſervile Affection, tho it may ſtop a Temptation, and hinder the Eruption of a Luſt into the groſs Act, yet it does not renew the Nature, and make us Holy and Heavenly. There may be a reſpective Diſlike of Sin with a direct Affection to it. Beſides, a meer ſervile Fear is repugnant to Nature, and will be expell'd if poſſible. Therefore, that we *may be in the Fear of the Lord all the day long*, we muſt regard him in his endearing Attributes, his Love, his Goodneſs and Compaſſion, his rewarding Mercy; and this will produce a filial Fear of Reverence and Caution, leſt we ſhould offend ſo gracious a God. As the natural Life is preſerved by grateful Food, not by Aloes and Wormwood, which are uſeful Medicines; ſo the Spiritual Life is maintained by the comfortable Apprehenſions of God, as the Rewarder of our

Fidelity in all our Trials.

(2.) Strip Sin of its Diſguiſes, waſh off its flattering Colours, that you may ſee its native Uglineſs. *Joſeph*'s reply to the Tempter, *How ſhall I do this great Wickedneſs?* Illuſion and Concupiſcence are the Inducements to Sin: When a Luſt repreſents the Temptation as very alluring, and hinders the Reflection of the Mind, upon the intrinſick and conſequential Evil of Sin, 'tis like the putting Poiſon into the Glaſs: but when it has ſo far corrupted the Mind, that Sin is eſteemed a ſmall Evil, Poiſon is thrown into the Fountain. If we conſider the Majeſty of the Lawgiver, there is no Law ſmall, nor Sin ſmall, that is the Tranſgreſſion of it. Yet the moſt are ſecure in an evil courſe, by Conceits that their Sins are ſmall. 'Tis true, there is a vaſt difference between Sins in their Nature and Circumſtances: there are inſenſible

Omiſſi-

Omiſſions and accuſing Acts, but the leaſt is damnable. Beſides, the allowance and number of Sins reputed ſmall, will involve under intolerable Guilt. What is lighter than a Grain of Sand? you may blow away a hundred with a Breath; And what is heavier than a heap of Sand condens'd together? 'Tis our Wiſdom and Duty to conſider the Evil of Sin in its eſſential Malignity, which implies no leſs, than that God was neither wiſe nor good in making his Law, and that he is not juſt and powerful to vindicate it: And when tempted to any pleaſant Sin, to conſider the due Aggravations of it, as *Joſeph* did, which will controul the Efficacy of the Temptation. I ſhall only add, that when a Man has mortified the Luſts of the Fleſh, he has overcome the main part of the infernal Army *that wars againſt the Soul*. Senſual Objects do power-

fully and pleaſantly inſinuate into carnal Men, and the Affections are very unwillingly reſtrain'd from them. To undertake the Cure of thoſe, whoſe Diſeaſe is their Pleaſure, is almoſt a vain Attempt: for they do not judg it an Evil to be regarded, and will not accept diſtaſteful Remedies.

(3.) Fly all tempting occaſions of Sin. *Joſeph* would not be alone with his Miſtreſs. There is no Vertue ſo confirmed, and in that degree of Eminence, but if one be frequently ingaged in vicious Society, 'tis in danger of being eclips'd and controul'd by the oppoſite Vice. If the Ermins will aſſociate with the Swine, they muſt lie in the Mire: if the Sheep with Wolves, they muſt learn to bite and devour: if Doves with Vultures, they muſt learn to live on the Prey. Our ſureſt Guard is to keep at a diſtance from all engaging Snares.

Snares. He that from Careleſneſs or Confidence ventures into Temptations, makes himſelf an eaſy Prey to the Tempter.

And let us daily pray for the Divine Aſſiſtance to keep us from the Evil of the World; without which all our Reſolutions will be as ineffectual as Ropes of Sand, to bind us to our Duty.

5. The Conſideration of the Evil of Sin is a powerful Motive to our ſolemn and ſpeedy Repentance. The remembrance of our Original and Actual Sins, will convince us, that we are born for Repentance. There are innumerable ſilent Sins, that are unobſerved, and do not alarm the Conſcience: and altho a true Saint will neither hide any Sin, nor ſuffer Sin to hide it ſelf in his Breaſt, yet the moſt holy Men in the World, have great reaſon with the Pſalmiſt, to ſay with melting Affections, *Who can underſtand his*

his Errors? O cleanſe me from my ſecret Sins; diſcover them to me by the Light of the Word, and cover them in the Blood of the Redeemer. There are Sins of Infirmity and daily Incurſion, from which none can be perfectly freed in this mortal State: theſe ſhould excite our Watchfulneſs, and be lamented with true Tears. There are crying Sins of a Crimſon Guilt, which are to be confeſt with heart-breaking Sorrow, confounding Shame, and implacable Antipathy againſt them, and to be forſaken for ever. Of theſe, ſome are of a deep die in their Nature, and ſome from the Circumſtances in committing them; ſome are of a heinous Nature, and more directly and expreſly renounce our Duty, and more immediately obſtruct our Communion with God: As a Mud-Wall intercepts the Light of the Sun from ſhining upon us.

2. Some

2. Some derive a greater Guilt from the Circumſtances in the commiſſion. Such are,

(1.) Sins againſt Knowledg: for according to the Ingrediency of the Will in Sin, the Guilt ariſes. Now when Conſcience interpoſes between the Carnal Heart and the Temptation, and repreſents the Evil of Sin, and deters from Compliance, and yet Men will venture to break the Divine Law, this exceedingly aggravates the Offence; for ſuch Sins are committed with a fuller Conſent, and are juſtly called Rebellion againſt the Light. And the clearer the Light is, the more it will increaſe the diſconſolate fearful Darkneſs in Hell.

(2.) Sins committed againſt the Love as well as the Law of God, are exceedingly aggravated. To pervert the Benefits we receive from God to his Diſhonour, to turn them into occaſions of Sin, which were deſigned

deſigned to endear Obedience to us; to ſin licentiouſly and ſecurely in hopes of an eaſy Pardon at laſt, is intenſive of our Guilt in a high degree. This is to poiſon the Antidote, and make it deadly. There is a Sacrifice to reconcile offended Juſtice; but if Men obſtinately continue in Sin, and abuſe the Grace of the Goſpel, there is no Sacrifice to appeaſe exaſperated Mercy.

(3.) Sins committed againſt ſolemn Promiſes and Engagements to forſake them, have a deeper Die: for Perfidiouſneſs is join'd with this Diſobedience. The Divine Law ſtrictly binds us to our Duty, antecedently to our Conſent; but when we promiſe to obey it, we increaſe our Obligations, and by ſinning, break double Chains. In ſhort, any habitual allowed Sin, induces a heavy Guilt; for it argues a deeper root and foundation of Sin in the Heart, a ſtronger Inclination to it, from

from whence the repeated Acts proceed, which are new Provocations to the pure Eyes of God. Accordingly in repenting Reflections, our Sorrow ſhould be moſt afflicting, our Humiliation deeper, our Self-condemnation moſt ſevere for thoſe Sins which have been moſt diſhonourable to God, and defiling to us. Not that we can make any Satisfaction for our Sins, tho we ſhould fill the Air with our Sighs, and Heaven with our Tears; but it becomes us to have our Sorrows inlarged in ſome proportion to our Unworthineſs. And this mournful Diſpoſition prepares us for the Grace of God. The Law does not allow Repentance, but exacts entire Obedience: 'tis the Privilege of the Goſpel, that repenting Sinners are aſſur'd of Forgiveneſs: without this Qualification 'tis inconſiſtent with the Majeſty, Purity and Juſtice of God, to extend pardoning Mercy to Sinners: for they

they will never value, nor humbly and ardently ſeek for Mercy, till they feel the woful Effects of Sin in their Conſcience: only the ſtung *Iſraelite* would look to the brazen Serpent. And this is requiſite to prevent our relapſing into Sin: for the Dominion of Sin being founded in the Love of Pleaſure, the proper means to extinguiſh, it is by a bitter Repentance: the Heart is firſt broken *for* Sin, and then *from* it.

To conclude; Let us renew our Repentance every day: let not the Wounds of our Spirits putrify: *let not the Sun go down upon God's Wrath*: let us always renew the Application of Chriſt's Blood that alone can cleanſe us from Sin.

SER-

SERMON III.

1 JOHN V. 2.

By this we know we are the Children of God, if we love God, and keep his Commandments.

OF all the Marks that are uſeful in the Trial of our Spiritual State in reference to Eternity, there is none affords a more clear and comfortable Aſſurance of God's ſpecial and ſaving Mercy, than Love to the Saints. This has often reſolved the Doubts, and quieted the Fears of afflicted enquiring Souls, when other Graces have not been ſo apprehenſible in their Operations. But there is no Mark which the deceitful Heart does more ſecurely

curely reſt upon, through the miſtake of Natural Human Love for that which is Spiritual and Divine: It is therefore moſt worthy our ſerious Thoughts, the Deceit being ſo eaſy and infinitely dangerous, to ſhew what is the unfeigned genuine Love of the Brethren, to which Salvation is annex'd, to confirm the humble ſincere Chriſtian, and undeceive preſuming Hypocrites.

The great Deſign of St. *John* in this Epiſtle, is to excite and enflame in Chriſtians the Love of God, and of their Brethren, the two comprehenſive Duties, and bright Sum of the Law, our principal Perfections in Heaven and Earth. Theſe he recommends by the moſt affectionate and obliging, the moſt warming, melting Perſwaſives; the ſuperlative Love of God to us, and our Communion with the Saints in Nature and Grace.

In

In the former Verſe the Apoſtle argues from the reality of the Effect, as an Evidence of the Cauſe. *Whoever believes that Jeſus is the Chriſt*, that is, the Saviour of the World, foretold by the Prophets, and expreſſes the Truth of that Faith in a ſutable Converſation, *is born of God; and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him alſo that is begotten of him.* Grace is not leſs powerful in producing tender reciprocal Affections between the Off-ſpring of the ſame Heavenly Father, than the ſubordinate Endearments of Nature. The Pretence is vain of Love to God, without loving his regenerate Children. And in the Text he argues from the knowledg of the Cauſe, to the diſcovering of the ſincerity of the Effect: *By this we know that we love the Children of God*, with a holy Affection, *if we love God, and keep his Commandments.*

There is but one Difficulty to be removed, that the Force of the Apoſtle's reaſoning may appear; 'tis this, a *Medium* to prove a thing muſt be a clearer Evidence than what is concluded by it: Now tho a Demonſtration from the Cauſe be more noble and ſcientifical, yet that which is drawn from the Effect, is more near to Senſe, and more diſcernable. And this is verified in the Inſtance before us; for the Love of God, who is abſolutely ſpiritual in his Being and Excellencies, doth not with that ſenſible Fervour affect and paſſionately tranſport us, as Love to his Children, with whom we viſibly converſe, and who are receptive of the moſt ſenſible Teſtimonies of our Affection. Accordingly the Apoſtle argues, *He that loves not his Brother whom he hath ſeen, how can he love God whom he hath not ſeen?* As the Motives to love our Brethren, from our Cojunction in Nature,

Nature, and familiar Converſation, are more capable to allure our Affections, and more ſenſibly ſtrike the Heart than the inviſible Deity, who is infinitely above us; by the ſame reaſon we may more eaſily judg of the truth of our Love to them, than of our Love to God. To this the Anſwer is clear; the Apoſtle doth not ſpeak of the Love of God, as a ſtill, ſilent, contemplative Affection, confined to the ſuperiour Faculty of the Soul, but as a burning, ſhining Affection (like Fire *) active and declarative of it ſelf in thoſe Effects that neceſſarily flow from it, that is voluntary Obedience to his Commands; and thus it becomes manifeſt to the renewed Conſcience, and is a moſt convincing Proof of the Sincerity of our Love to the Saints.

* Lumine qui ſemper proditur ipſi ſuo.

The Text being cleared, affords this Doctrine.

Doct. *The Sincerity of our Love to the Children of God, is certainly diſcovered by our Love to God, and Obedience to his Commands.*

For the Illuſtration and Proof of the Point, I will briefly ſhew,

I. Who are deſcribed by this Title, *The Children of God.*

II. What is included in our Love to them.

III. What the Love of God is, and the Obedience that flows from it.

IV. How from Love to God, and willing Obedience to his Commands, we may convincingly know the Sincerity of our Love to his Children.

To explain the firſt, we muſt conſider that this Title, *The Children of*

of God, is given upon ſeveral accounts.

Firſt, By Creation the Angels are called *the Sons of God, and Men his Off-ſpring.*

The reaſon of the Title is,

1. The manner of their Production by his immediate Power. Thus he is ſtiled, *The Father of Spirits*, in diſtinction from *the Fathers of the Fleſh.* For tho the Conception and forming of the Body be the Work of his ſecret Providence, yet 'tis by the hand of Nature, the Parents concurring as the ſecond Cauſes of it: but the Production of the Soul is to be entirely aſcribed to his Power, without the Intervention of any Creature.

2. In their ſpiritual immortal Nature, and the intellectual Operations flowing from it, there is an Image and Reſemblance of God; from whence this Title is common

to all reaſonable Creatures, and peculiar to them: for tho Matter may be ordered and faſhioned by the Hand of God into a Figure of admirable Beauty, yet 'tis not capable of his Likeneſs and Image; ſo that neither the Lights of Heaven, nor the Beaſts and Plants of the Earth are called his Children.

Secondly, By External Calling and Covenant ſome are denominated his Children; for by this Evangelical Conſtitution God is pleaſed to receive Believers into a filial Relation. Indeed where there is not a cordial Conſent and Subjection to the Terms of the Covenant, viſible Profeſſion, and the receiving the External Seals of it, will be of no advantage; but the publick ſerious owning of the Goſpel, entitles a Perſon to be of the Society of Chriſtians; and *Filius* and *Fœderatus* are all one.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, There is Sonſhip that ariſes from ſupernatural Regeneration; that is the communicating a new Nature to Man, whereby there is a holy and bleſſed Change in the directive and commanding Faculties, the Underſtanding and Will, and in the Affections, and conſequently in the whole Life. This is wrought by the Efficacy of the Word and Spirit, and is called by our Saviour Regeneration, becauſe it is not our Original Carnal Birth, but a Second and Celeſtial. 'Tis with the new Man in Grace, as with an Infant in Nature, that has the eſſential Parts that compoſe a Man; a Soul endowed with all its Faculties, a Body with all its Organs and Parts, but not in the Vigor of mature Age. Thus renewed Holineſs in a Chriſtian, is compleat and entire in its Parts, but not in Perfection of Degrees; there is an univerſal Inclination to

all that is holy, juſt and good, and a univerſal Averſion from Sin, tho the Executive Power be not equal. And regenerate Chriſtians are truly called the Children of God; for as in Natural Generation there is communicated a Principle of Life and ſutable Operations, from whence the Title and Relation of a Father ariſes; ſo in Regeneration there are derived ſuch holy and heavenly Qualities to the Soul, as conſtitute a *Divine Nature* in Man, whereby he is Partaker of the *Life* and *Likeneſs* of God himſelf: from hence he is a Child of God, and has an Intereſt and Propriety in his Favour, Power and Promiſes, and all the Good that flows from them, and a Title to the Eternal Inheritance.

II. I will ſhew what is included in our Love to the Children of God.

Firſt,

Firſt, The Principle of this Love is Divine. *The Soul is purified through the Spirit to unfeigned Love of the Brethren.* Naturally the Judgment is corrupted, and the Will depraved, that carnal Reſpects either of Profit or Pleaſure are the quick and ſenſible Incitements of Love; and till the Soul be cured of the ſenſual Contagion, the Inclination can never be directed, and the Deſires faſtned on the ſupernatural Image of God in his Saints. As Holineſs in the Creature is a Ray derived from the infinite Beauty of God's Holineſs, ſo the Love of Holineſs is a Spark from the ſacred Fire of his Love. St. *John* exhorts Chriſtians, *Let us love one another, for Love is of God.* Natural Love among Men is by his general Providence, but a gracious Love to the Saints is by his ſpecial Influence. The natural Affection muſt be *baptized with the Holy Ghoſt, as with*

1 Pet. 1. 22.

1 Joh. 4. 7.

with Fire, to refine it to a Divine Purity.

Secondly, The Qualifications of this Love are as follow:

1. It is ſincere and cordial; it does not appear only in Expreſſions from the Tongue and Countenance, but ſprings from the Integrity of the Heart. 'Tis ſtiled *unfeigned Love of the Brethren; 'tis a Love not in Word and Tongue only, but in Deed and Truth.* A counterfeit formal Affection, ſet off with artificial Colours, is ſo far from being pleaſing to God, the Searcher and Judg of Hearts, that 'tis infinitely provoking to him.

2. 'Tis pure; the attractive Cauſe of it is the Image of God appearing in them. Our Saviour aſſures us, that Love ſhall be glorioufly rewarded, that reſpects *a Diſciple upon that account as a Diſciple, and a righteous Man as a righteous Man.*

Man. The holy Love commanded in the Goſpel, is to Chriſtians for their Divine Relation, as the Children of God, as the Members of Chriſt, and Temples of the Holy Ghoſt.

3. From hence it is univerſal, extended to all the Saints. The Church is compoſed of Chriſtians that are different in their Gifts and Graces, and in their external Order; ſome excel in Knowledg, and Zeal, and Love, in active Graces; others in Humility, Meekneſs and Patience, that ſuſtain and adorn them in Sufferings; ſome are in a higher Rank, others are in humble Circumſtances: as in the viſible World things are placed ſutably to their Natures, the Stars in the Heavens, Flowers in the Earth: and our ſpecial Reſpects are due to thoſe whom the Favour of God has dignified above others, and in whom the Brightneſs and Power of Grace ſhines

ſhines more clearly: for according as there are more Reaſons that make a Perſon deſerving Love, the degrees of Love ſhould riſe in proportion. But a dear Affection is due even to the loweſt Saints; for all have Communion in the ſame holy Nature, and are equally inſtated in the ſame bleſſed Alliance.

4. It muſt be fervent, not only in Truth, but in a degree of Eminency. St. *Peter* joins the two Qualifications; *See that ye love one another with a pure Heart fervently.* Our Saviour ſets before us his own Pattern, as a Pillar of Fire to direct and inflame us; *This is my Commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you. As I have loved you!* Admirable Example! His Love was ſingular and ſuperlative; a Love that ſaves and aſtoniſhes us at once; for he willingly gave his precious Life for our Ranſom. This we

John 15. 12.

ſhould

ſhould endeavour to reſemble, tho our higheſt Expreſſions of Love and Compaſſion to the Saints, are but a weak and imperfect Imitation of his Divine Perfection.

I ſhall add farther; This Love includes all kinds of Love.

1. The Love of Eſteem correſpondent to the real Worth and ſpecial Goodneſs of the Saints. 'Tis one Character of a Citizen of Heaven, that *in his Eyes a vile Perſon is contemned*, however ſet off by the Glory of the World, and the Ornaments of the preſent State, that, as a falſe Mask, conceal their foul Deformity to carnal Perſons; *but he honours them that fear the Lord*, tho diſfigured by Calumnies, tho obſcur'd and depreſs'd by Afflictions, and made like their bleſſed Head, in whom there was *no Form nor Comelineſs in the Judgment of Fools*. In our Valuation, Divine Grace ſhould Pſal. 15.

ſhould turn the Scales againſt all the natural or acquired Perfections of Body or Mind; Beauty, Strength, Wit, Eloquence, human Wiſdom; againſt all the external Advantages of this Life, Nobility, Riches, Power, and whatever is admired by a carnal Eye. The Judgment and Love of God ſhould regulate ours. A Saint is more valued by God, than the higheſt Princes; nay, than the Angels themſelves, conſidered only with reſpect to their ſpiritual Nature. He calls them *his peculiar Treaſure*, *his Jewels*, *the firſt-Fruits of the Creatures*, ſacred for his Uſe and Glory, in compariſon of whom, the reſt of the World are but Dregs, a corrupt Maſs. They are ſtiled *his Sons*; being Partakers of that Life of which he is the Author and Pattern: And what are all the Titles on Earth, compared with ſo Divine a Dignity?

2. The

2. The Love of Deſire, of their preſent and future Happineſs. The Perfection of Love conſiſts more in the Deſire than in the Effects; and the continued fervent Prayers that the Saints preſent to God for one another, are the Expreſſions of their Love.

3. The Love of Delight, in ſpiritual Communion with them. All the Attractives of human Converſation, Wit, Mirth, Sweetneſs of Behaviour, and wiſe Diſcourſe, cannot make any Society ſo dear and pleaſant to one that is a Lover of Holineſs, as the Communion of Saints. *David*, whoſe Breaſt was very ſenſible of the tender Affections of Love and Joy, tells us, That *the Saints in the Earth, the Excellent, were the chief Object of his Delight.* Pſal. 16. And conſequent to this, there is a cordial Sympathy with them in their Joys and Sorrows, being Members of the ſame Body, and having an Intereſt

Intereſt in all their Good or Evil. 'Tis obſervable, when the Holy Spirit deſcribes the ſweeteſt human Comforts that are the preſent Reward of the godly Man, the Enjoyment of his Eſtate in the dear Society of his Wife and Children, there is a Promiſe annex'd, that ſweetens all the reſt, That *he ſhall ſee the Good of* Jeruſalem, *and Peace upon* Iſrael. Without this all Temporal Comforts are mix'd with bitter Diſpleaſure to him. There is an eminent Inſtance of this in *Nehemiah*, whom all the Pleaſures of the *Perſian* Court could not ſatisfy, whilſt *Jeruſalem* was deſolately miſerable.

Pſal. 128.

Neh. 2.

4. The Love of Service and Beneficence, that declares it ſelf in all outward Offices and Acts for the Good of the Saints: And theſe are various; ſome are of a ſublimer Nature, and concern their Souls; as ſpiritual Counſel and Inſtruction, com-

compaſſionate Admonition and Conſolation, the confirming them in Good, and the fortifying them againſt Evil, the doing whatever may preſerve and advance the Life and Vigor of the inward Man; others reſpect their Bodies and Temporal Condition; directing them in their Affairs, protecting them from Injuries, ſupplying their Wants, univerſally aſſiſting them for their tolerable Paſſage through the World. And all theſe Acts are to be chearfully perfomed; there is more Joy in conferring than receiving a Benefit, becauſe Love is more exerciſed in the one than the other. In ſhort, the higheſt Effect of Love that comprizes all the reſt, is to die for the Brethren; and this we ought to do when the Honour of God, and Welfare of the Church require it. *Hereby perceive we the Love of God, becauſe he laid down his Life for us; and we ought to lay down*

our Lives for the Brethren. If Chriſtians thus loved one another, the Church on Earth would be a lively Image of the bleſſed Society above.

III. The Love of God, and Obedience to his Commands, the Product of it are to be conſidered.

Firſt, The Love of God has its Riſe from the Conſideration of his amiable Excellencies, that render him infinitely worthy of the higheſt Affection; and from the bleſſed Benefits of Creation, Preſervation Redemption and Glorification, that we may expect from his pure Goodneſs and Mercy. This is the moſt clear and eſſential Character of a Child of God, and moſt peculiarly diſtinguiſhes him from unrenewed Men, however accompliſhed by Civil Vertues.

Now

Now the internal Exerciſe of Love to God, in the Valuation of his Favour, as that which is better than Life, in earneſt Deſires of Communion with him, in raviſhing Joy in the Teſtimonies and Aſſurance of his Love, in mourning for what is diſpleaſing to him, is in the ſecret of the Soul; but with this there is inſeparably join'd a true and viſible Declaration of our Love in Obedience to him. *This is the Love of God*, the moſt real and undeceitful Expreſſion of it, *that we keep his Commandments.* 1 Joh. 3. 16.

The Obedience that ſprings from Love, is,

1. Uniform and univerſal; for the two principal and neceſſary Effects of Love are an ardent Deſire to pleaſe God, and an equal Care not to diſpleaſe him in any thing. Now the Law of God is the Signification of his Soveraign and Holy Will, and the doing of

it is very pleaſing to him, both upon the account of the Subjection of the Creature to his Authority, and Conformity to his Purity: He declares that Obedience is better than the moſt coſtly Sacrifice. There is an abſolute peremptory Repugnance between Love to him, and deſpiſing his Commands: And from thence it follows, that Love inclines the Soul to obey all God's Precepts, not only thoſe of eaſy Obſervation, but the moſt difficult and diſtaſteful to the Carnal Appetites; for the Authority of God runs through all, and his Holineſs ſhines in all. Servile Fear is a partial Principle, and cauſes an unequal Reſpect to the Divine Law; it reſtrains from Sins of greater Guilt, from ſuch diſorderly and diſſolute Actions at which Conſcience takes Fire; but others are indulged: it excites to good Works of ſome kind, but neglects others that are equally

equally neceſſary. But Love regards the whole Law in all its Injunctions and Prohibitions; not meerly to pleaſe our ſelves, that we may not feel the ſtings of an accuſing Conſcience, but to pleaſe the Lawgiver.

2. The Obedience of Love is accurate; and this is a natural Conſequence of the former. The Divine Law is a Rule not only for our outward Converſation, but of our Thoughts and Affections, of all the interior workings of the Soul, that are open before God. Thus it requires Religious Service, not only in the external Performance, but thoſe reverent holy Affections, thoſe pure Aims, wherein the Life and Beauty, the Spirit and true Value of Divine Worſhip conſiſts. Thus it commands the Duties of Equity, Charity and Sobriety, all *Civil* and *Natural Duties* for Divine Ends, to *pleaſe* and *glorify God*. It forbids Heb. 13. 16.

all kinds and degrees of Sin; not only groſs Acts, but the inward Luſtings that have a tendency to them. Now the Love of God is the Principle of ſpiritual Perfection. 'Tis called *the fulfilling of the Law*, not only as it is a comprehenſive Grace, but in that it draws forth all the active Powers of the Soul to obey it in an exact manner. This cauſes a tender ſenſe of our Failings, and a ſevere Circumſpection over our Ways, that nothing be allowed that is diſpleaſing to the Divine Eyes. Since the moſt excellent Saints are God's chiefeſt Favourites, Love makes the holy Soul to ſtrive to be like him in all poſſible degrees of Purity. Thus St. *Paul*, in whom the Love of Chriſt was the imperial commanding Affection, declares, his zealous endeavour to be *conformable to the Death of Chriſt*, in dying to Sin, as Chriſt died for Sin, and that *he might attain to the*

1 Cor. 10. 31.

Phil. 3. 10, 11.

Reſur-

Reſurrection of the Dead, that Perfection of Holineſs that is in the immortal State.

3. The Obedience of Love is choſen and pleaſant. *This is the Love of God, that we keep his Commandments, and his Commandments are not grievous.* 1 Joh. 5. 3. Thoſe that are Strangers to this Heavenly Affection, imagine that a ſollicitous diligent Reſpect to all God's Precepts, is a melancholy Task; but it is delightful to the Saints: for Obedience is the continual exerciſe of Love to God, the Paradiſe of holy Souls. The mortification of the Carnal Appetites, and the reſtraint from ſuch Objects as powerfully inſinuate and engage Carnal Hearts, is with a freer Complacency to a Saint, than a ſenſual Fruition of them. The ſharpeſt Sufferings for Religion are allayed, nay ſweetned to a Saint from the Love of God, that is then moſt ſincerely, ſtrongly,

and purely acted. The Apoſtle more rejoiced in ſharp Tribulation for Chriſt's ſake, than in Divine Revelation.

4. The Love of God produces perſevering Obedience. Servile Compliance is inconſtant. A Slave hates the Duties he performs, and loves the Sins he dares not commit; therefore as ſoon as he is releas'd from his Chain and his Fear, his Obedience ceaſes: but a Son is perfectly pleas'd with his Father's Will, and the Tenor of his Life is correſpondent to it. He that is preſs'd by Fear to ſerve in an Army, will deſert his Colours the firſt Opportunity; but a Volunteer, that for the love of Valour, and of his Country, liſts himſelf, will continue in the Service. The Motion that is cauſed by outward Poiſes, will ceaſe when the Weights are down; but that which proceeds from an inward Principle of Life, is continual;

nual; and ſuch is the Love of God planted in the Breaſt of a Chriſtian.

IV. We are to prove that from the Love of God, and willing Obedience to his Commands, we may convincingly know the ſincerity of our Love to his Children.

There is an inſeparable Union between theſe two Graces, and the one ariſes out of the other. *Godlineſs* and *Brotherly Kindneſs* are joined by the Apoſtle. And it will be evident that where this Affection of Love to the Saints is ſincere and gracious, there will be an entire and joyful reſpect to the Law of God, by conſidering the Reaſons and Motives of it.

Firſt, The Divine Command requires this Love. *Theſe things I command you*, ſaith our Saviour, *that ye love one another*. This Precept ſo often repeated,

repeated, and powerfully re-inforc'd by him, made ſo deep an Impreſſion on the firſt Chriſtians, that *they had one Heart, and one Soul, and their Eſtates were common between them.* And in the next ſucceeding Ages, this fraternal Love was ſo conſpicuous in the Profeſſors of his ſacred Diſcipline, that their Enemies obſerv'd it as a rare and remarkable thing: *See how the Chriſtians love one another! ſee how ready they are to die for one another!* Now the ſame gracious Principle that inclines us to do one Command, will make us univerſally willing to obſerve all; for ſincere Obedience primarily reſpects the Authority of the Lawgiver, which binds the whole Law upon the Conſcience. And as he that *breaks the Law wilfully in one Point, is guilty of all*, becauſe the Violation of a ſingle Precept proceeds from the ſame Cauſe that induces Men to tranſgreſs all, that is, Contempt of the

Tert. Apol. c. 33.

James 2.

the Divine Majeſty; ſo he that ſincerely obeys one Command, does with conſent of Heart, and ſerious Endeavours obey all. And from hence 'tis clear, that without a religious and unreſerved regard of the Divine Commands, 'tis impoſſible there ſhould be in any Perſon a gracious Affection to the Saints; that is the product of Obedience to God, and conſequently the obſervance of his Precepts, is the certain Proof of our Love to his Children.

Secondly, Spiritual Love to the Saints ariſes from the ſight of the Divine Image appearing in their Converſation. Now if the Beauty of Holineſs be the attractive of our Love, it will be faſtned on the Law of God in the moſt intenſe degree. The moſt excellent Saints on Earth have ſome mixtures of Corruption; their Holineſs is like the Morning-light,

light, that is checker'd with the Shadows and Obſcurity of the Night; and 'tis our Wiſdom not to love their Infirmities, but to preſerve an unſtained Affection to them. But the Law of God is the faireſt Tranſcript of his Nature, wherein his glorious Holineſs is moſt reſplendent. *The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the Soul; the Commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightning the Eyes.* This raviſh'd the Heart of *David* with an inexpreſſible Affection. *O how I love thy Law! it is my Meditation all the day.* And he repeats the Declaration of his Love to it with new Fervor, upon this ground; *I love thy Law, becauſe it is pure.* Now Love to the Commands of God will tranſcribe them in our Hearts and Lives. As affectionate Expreſſions to the Children of God, without the real ſupply of their Wants, are but the ſhadows of Love; ſo words

Pſal. 19. 7, 8.

Pſal. 119.

of

of Eſteem and Reſpect to the Law of God, without unfeigned and univerſal Obedience, are but an empty Pretence.

Thirdly, The Divine Relation of the Saints to God as their Father, is the Motive of Spiritual Love to them. And this is conſequent to the former; for by partaking of his Holineſs, they partake of his Life and Likeneſs. And from hence they are the deareſt Objects of his Love; his Eye and Heart is always upon them. Now if this Conſideration excites Love to the Children of God, it will be as powerful to incline us to keep his Commands; for the Law of God, that is the Copy of his Sacred Will, is moſt near to his Nature, and he is infinitely tender of it. Our Saviour tells us, that *it is eaſier for Heaven and Earth to paſs away, than for one tittle of the Law* Luke 16. 17.

to

to fail. If the entire World, and all the Inhabitants of it were deſtroyed, there would be no loſs to God; but if the Law loſe its Authority and Obligation, the Divine Holineſs would ſuffer a Blemiſh.

The Uſe of the Doctrine is, to try our Love to the Children of God, to which all pretend, by this infallible Rule, our Obedience to his Commands. This is abſolutely neceſſary, becauſe the Deceit is ſo eaſy and ſo dangerous: and it will be moſt comfortable, if upon this Trial our Love be found to be Spiritual and Divine. The Deceit is eaſy, becauſe Acts of Love may be expreſſed to the Saints from other Principles than the Love of God: Some for vain-Glory are bountiful; and when their Charity ſeems ſo viſibly Divine, that Men admire it, there is the Worm of Vanity at the Root, that corrupts and makes

it

it odious to God. The Phariſees are charged with this by our Saviour; their Alms were not the Effect of Charity, but Oſtentation; and whilſt they endeavoured to make their Vices vertuous, they made their Vertues vicious. There is a natural Love among Perſons united by Conſanguinity, that remains ſo entire ſince the Ruine of Mankind by the Fall, and is rather from the force of Nature, than the virtue of the Will, and this is in all kind Offices may be expreſs'd to the Saints. There is a ſweetneſs of Temper in ſome, that inclines them to wiſh well to all, and ſuch tender Affections that are eaſily moved and melted at the ſight of others Miſeries; and ſuch may be beneficent and compaſſionate to the Saints in their Afflictions: but the Spring of this Love is Good-Nature, not Divine Grace. There are Human Reſpects that incline Mat. 6. 2.

others

others to Kindneſs to the Saints, as they are united by Intereſt, Fellow-Citizens and Neighbours, and as they receive Advantage by Commerce with them, or as obliged by their Benefits: But Civil Amity and Gratitude are not that holy Affection that is an Aſſurance of our Spiritual State. There are other Motives of Love to the Saints, that are not ſo low nor mercenary; in the thickeſt Darkneſs of Paganiſm, the Light of Reaſon diſcovered the amiable Excellence of Vertue, as becoming the Human Nature, and uſeful for the Tranquillity and Welfare of Mankind; and the Moral Goodneſs that adorns the Saints, the Innocence, Purity, Meekneſs, Juſtice, Clemency, Benignity, that are viſible in their Converſations, may draw Reſpects from others who are Strangers to the Love of God, and careleſs of his Commandments.

And

And as the Miſtake of this Affection is eaſy, ſo it is infinitely dangerous; for he that builds his hope of Heaven upon a *ſandy Foundation*, upon falſe Grounds, will fall ruinouſly from his Hopes and Felicity at laſt. How fearful will be the Diſappointment of one that has been a Favourer of the Saints, that has defended their Cauſe, protected their Perſons, relieved their Neceſſities, and preſum'd for this, that his Condition is ſafe as to Eternity, tho he lives in the known neglect of other Duties, and the indulgent Practice of ſome Sin?

But if we find that our Love to the Children of God flows from our Love to God, that ſways the Soul to an entire compliance to his Commands, and makes us obſervant of them in the courſe of our Lives: What a *bleſſed Hope* ariſes from this Reflection? We

need not have the Book of the Divine Decrees opened, and the Secrets of Election unvail'd; *for we*
1 Joh. 3. 14. *know that we are past from Death to Life, if we love the Brethren.* This is an infallible Effect and Sign of the Spiritual Life, and the Seed and Evidence of Eternal Life.

SER-

How to bear Afflictions.

SERMON IV.

HEBREWS xii. 5.

My Son deſpiſe not thou the chaſtening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.

THE words are an excellent Paſſage from the Book of the *Proverbs*; wherein the Supream Eternal Wiſdom is repreſented, giving Inſtruction to the Afflicted, how to behave themſelves under Troubles, ſo as they may prove beneficial to them: the Counſel is, that they ſhould preſerve a Temperament of Spirit, between the exceſs and defect of Patience and Courage, Prov. 3. 12.

neither deſpiſing the Chaſtenings of the Lord, by a ſinful neglect of them as a ſmall unconcerning matter, nor fainting under them, as a Burden ſo great and oppreſſing, that no Deliverance was to be expected. To enforce the Exhortation, Wiſdom uſeth the amiable and endearing Title, *My Son*, to ſignify that God in the quality of a Father, corrects his People; the Conſideration whereof is very proper to conciliate Reverence to his Hand, and to encourage their Hopes of a bleſſed Iſſue.

The Propoſition that ariſes from the Words is this;

'Tis the Duty and beſt Wiſdom of afflicted Chriſtians, to preſerve themſeves from the vicious Extreams of deſpiſing the Chaſtenings of the Lord, or fainting under them.

To

To illuſtrate this by a clear Method, I ſhall endevour to ſhew,

I. What it is to deſpiſe the Chaſtenings of the Lord, and the Cauſes of it.
II. What fainting under his Rebukes ſignifies, and what makes us incident to it.
III. Prove that 'tis the Duty and beſt Wiſdom of the Afflicted to avoid theſe Extreams.
IV. Apply it.

Firſt, To deſpiſe the Chaſtenings of the Lord, imports the making no account of them, as unworthy of ſerious Regard; and includes Inconſiderateneſs of Mind, and an Inſenſibleneſs of Heart. I. ὀλιγω-ρεῖ.

1. Inconſiderateneſs of Mind, with reſpect to the Author or End of Chaſtenings.

(1.) With reſpect to the Author, when the Afflicted looks only down- Job 5. 6.

wards, as if the Rod of Affliction ſprang out of the Duſt, and there were no ſuperiour Cauſe that ſent it.

Thus many apprehend the Evils that befal them, either meerly as the Productions of Natural Cauſes, or as caſual Events, or the Effects of the Diſpleaſure and Injuſtice of Men, but never look on the other ſide of the Vail of the ſecond Cauſes, to that inviſible Providence that orders all. If a Diſeaſe ſtrikes their Bodies, they attribute it to the extremity of Heat or Cold, that diſtempers their Humours: if a Loſs comes in their Eſtates, 'tis aſcribed to Chance, Careleſneſs and Falſeneſs of ſome upon whom they depended; but God is concealed from their ſight by the nearneſs of the immediate Agent. Whereas the principal Cauſe of all Temporal Evils is the over-ruling Providence of God.

Amos 3. 6. *Shall there be Evil in a City, and the Lord*

Lord hath not done it? They come not only with his Knowledg and Will, but by his Efficiency. The Locuſts that infected *Egypt* are as real an Effect of God's Wrath, as the moſt miraculous Plague, altho an Eaſt Wind brought them, and a Weſt Wind carried them away. The Arrow that was ſhot at a venture, and pierc'd between the Joints of *Ahab*'s Armour, was directed by the Hand of God for his Deſtruction. *Shimei*'s curſing of *David*, tho it was the overflowing of his Gall, the Effect of his Malignity, yet that holy King look'd higher, and acknowledged the Lord hath bidden him. As the Lord is a God of Power, and can inflict what Judgments he pleaſeth immediately; ſo he is a God of Order, and uſually puniſheth in this World by ſubordinate means. Now where-ever he ſtrikes, tho his Hand is wrap'd up in a Cloud, yet if it be not ob-

Exod. 10. 13, 19.

1 Kings 22. 34.

1 Sam. 16. 11.

ſerved, eſpecially if by habitual Incogitancy Men conſider not with whom they have to do in their various Troubles, this profane neglect is no leſs than a deſpiſing the Chaſtenings of the Lord.

(2.) Inconſiderateneſs of the End of the Divine Diſcipline, is a great degree of Contempt. The Evils that God inflicts are as real a part of his Providence, as the Bleſſings he beſtows; as in the courſe of Nature the Darkneſs of the Night is by his Order, as well as the Light of the Day: therefore they are always ſent for ſome wiſe and holy Deſign. Sometime, tho more rarely, they are only for trial, to exerciſe the Faith, Humility, Patience of eminent Saints; for otherwiſe God would loſe in a great meaſure the Honour and Renown, and his Favourites the Reward of thoſe Graces, Affictions being the Sphere of their Activity. But for the moſt

part

part they are caſtigatory, to bring us to a ſight and ſenſe of our State, to render Sin more evident and odious to us. They are fitly expreſt, by pouring from Veſſel to Veſſel, that diſcovers the Dregs and Sediment, and makes it offenſive, that before was concealed. The leaſt Affliction even to the Godly, is uſually an Application of the Phyſician of Spirits for ſome growing Diſtemper: every Corroſive is for ſome proud Fleſh that muſt be taken away. In ſhort, they are deliberate Diſpenſations to cauſe Men to reflect upon their Works and Ways, and break off their Sins by ſincere Obedience. Therefore we are commanded *to hear the Voice of the Rod, and who hath appointed it.* Mic. 6. 9. 'Tis a Preacher of Repentance, to lead us to the Knowledg and Conſideration of our ſelves. The Diſtreſs of *Joſeph*'s Brethren was to revive their Memory of his Sorrows cauſed by

by their Cruelty. Now when Men diſregard the Embaſſy of the Rod, are unconvinceable, notwithſtanding its lively Leſſons; when they neither look up to him that ſtrikes, nor within to the Cauſe that provokes his Diſpleaſure; when they are careleſs to reform their Ways, and to comply with his holy Will, as if Afflictions were only common Accidents of this mutable State, the Effects of raſh Fortune or blind Fate, without Deſign and Judgment, and not ſent for their Amendment, this is a prodigious deſpiſing of God's Hand. For this reaſon the Scripture compares Men to the moſt inobſervant Creatures, to *the wild Aſſes Colt, the deaf Adder, to the ſilly Dove without Heart*: and the Advantage is on the Beaſts ſide, for their Inconſideration proceeds meerly from the Incapacity of Matter, of which they are wholly compos'd to perform reflex Acts: but Man's

Job 11. 12.
Pſal. 58. 4.
Hoſea 7. 11.

Incogi-

Incogitancy is the ſole fault of his Spirit, that wilfully neglects his Duty. The Prophet charges this Guilt upon the Jews, *Lord, when thy Hand is lifted up, they will not ſee.* Iſa. 26. 11.

2. Inſenſibility of Heart is an eminent degree of deſpiſing the Lord's Chaſtenings. A penſive feeling of Judgments is very congruous, whether we conſider them *in genere Phyſico*, or *Morali*; either materially as afflictive to Nature, or as the ſigns of Divine Diſpleaſure: for the Affections were planted in the Human Nature by the Hand of God himſelf, and are duly exerciſed in proportion to the quality of their Objects. And when Grace comes, it ſoftens the Breaſt, and gives a quick and tender ſenſe of God's Frown. An eminent Inſtance we have in *David*, tho of Heroical Courage; yet in his ſad aſcent to Mount *Olivet*, he went up weeping with his Head covered, and 2 Sam. 15. 30.

his

his Feet bare, to teſtify his humble and ſubmiſſive ſenſe of God's Anger againſt him. Now when Men are inſenſible of Judgments, either conſidered as natural or penal Evils; if when they ſuffer the loſs of Relations or other Troubles, they preſently fly to the Comforts of the Heathens, that we are all mortal, and what can't be help'd muſt be endured, without the Senſe Humanity requires; that Calm is like that of the dead Sea, a real Curſe: Or ſuppoſe natural Affection works a little, yet there is no Apprehenſion and Concernment for God's Diſpleaſure, which ſhould be infinitely more affecting than any outward Trouble, how ſharp ſoever, no ſerious deep Humiliation under his Hand, no yielding up our ſelves to his Management; this moſt juſtly provokes him: of this Temper were
Jer. 5. 3. thoſe deſcribed by *Jeremiah*, *Thou haſt ſtricken them, but they have not grieved*;

grieved; thou haſt conſumed them, but they refuſed to receive Correction.

Secondly, The Cauſes of this deſpiſing of God's Chaſtenings are:

1. A contracted Stupidity of Soul, proceeding from a courſe in Sin. There is a natural Stubbornneſs and Contumacy in the Heart againſt God, a vicious Quality derived from rebellious *Adam*; we are all hewn out of the Rock, and dig'd out of the Quarry: and this is one of the worſt Effects of Sin, and a great part of its Deceitfulneſs, that by ſtealth it increaſeth the natural Hardneſs, by degrees it creeps on like a Gangreen, and cauſes an Indolency. Heb. 3. 13. The Practice of Sin makes the Heart like an Adamant, the hardeſt of Stones, that exceeds that of Rocks. Zech. 7. 12. From hence proceeds ſuch Unteachableneſs of the Mind, that when God ſpeaks and ſtrikes, yet Sinners will not be convinc'd; that Briars and

and Thorns are only effectual to teach them; and ſuch an Untractableneſs in the Will, that when the Sinner is ſtormed by Affliction, and ſome Light breaks into the Underſtanding, yet it refuſeth to obey God's Call.

2. Carnal Diverſions are another Cauſe of ſlighting God's Hand. The Pleaſures and Cares of the World, as they render Men inapprehenſive of Judgments to come, ſo regardleſs of thoſe that are preſent. Some when ever they feel the Smart of a Croſs, uſe all the Arts of Oblivion to loſe the Senſe of it. The Affliction inſtead of a leading them to Repentance, leads them to vain Converſations, to Comedies and other ſinful Delights, to drive away Sorrow. Others, altho they do not venture upon forbidden things to relieve their Melancholy, yet when God by ſharp and ſenſible Admonitions calls upon them, they have preſent-

Luke 21. 34.

preſently recourſe to Temporal Comforts, which altho lawful and innocent in themſelves, yet are as unproper at that time, as the taking of a Cordial when a Vomit begins to work: for whereas Chaſtiſements are ſent to awaken and affect us, by conſidering our Sins in their bitter Fruits, this unſeaſonable Application of ſenſual Comforts wholly defeats God's Deſign. For nothing ſo much hinders ſerious Conſideration as a voluptuous indulging the Senſes in things pleaſing; like Opiate Medicines, they ſtupify the Conſcience, and benumn the Heart. 'Tis *Solomon*'s Expreſſion, *I ſaid of Laughter, It is mad*: for as Diſtraction breaks the Connexion of the Thoughts, ſo Mirth ſhuffles our moſt ſerious Thoughts into diſorder, and cauſes Men to paſs over their Troubles without Reflection and Remorſe. 1 Kings 16.

And

And as the Pleaſures, ſo the Buſineſs of the World cauſe a ſupine Security under Judgments. We have an amazing Inſtance of it in *Hiel* the Bethlemite, who laid the Foundation of his City in the Death of his Firſt-born, and ſet up the Gates of it in his youngeſt Son; yet he was ſo intent upon his Building, that he diſregarded the Divine *Nemeſis*, that was apparent, fulfilling the terrible Threatning propheſied againſt the Builder of *Jericho*.

Joſhua 6. 26.

3. An obſtinate fierceneſs of Spirit, a Diabolical Fortitude is the Cauſe that ſometimes Men deſpiſe afflicting Providences ſo far as to reſiſt them. There is a paſſive Malignity in all, an Unaptneſs to be wrought on, and to receive Spiritual and Heavenly Impreſſions from God's Hand; but in ſome of the Sons of Perdition there is an active Malignity, whereby they furiouſly repel

repel Judgments as if they could oppoſe the Almighty. Their Hearts are of an Anvil-Temper, made harder by Afflictions, and reverberate the Blow, like that Roman Emperor, who inſtead of humbling and reforming at God's Voice in Thunder, thundred back again. All Judgments that befal them, are as Strokes given to wild Beaſts, that inſtead of taming them, enrage them to higher degrees of Fierceneſs.

The Prophet deſcribed ſome of this Rank of Sinners, who ſaid *in the Pride and Stoutneſs of their Hearts, the Bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewen Stones: the Sycomores are cut down, but we will change them into Cedars.* Iſa. 9. 9, 10.

And many though not Explicitly, yet virtually declare a Reſolution notwithſtanding the moſt viſible Diſcouragements from Heaven, to proceed in their ſinful courſes

with more greedineſs, and from a ſullen ſecret Atheiſm are more ſtrongly carried to gratify their Luſts again, when they are in Afflictions.

II. I ſhall proceed to conſider the other Extream of fainting under God's Rebukes.

ἐκλύω. 1. The Original Word ſignifies the ſlackening and relaxing of things that were firmly join'd together. The Strength of the Body proceeds from the Union of the Parts, when they are well compacted together. By their disjointing 'tis enfeebled, and rendred unfit for Labour. In this Motion the Apoſtle in the 12*th* Verſe *exhorts them to lift up the Hands that hang down, and ſtrengthen the feeble Knees*: That is, to encourage and ſtrengthen their Souls by a real belief of the Promiſes made to afflicted Chriſtians.

2. It

2. It may reſpect the ſinking, and falling away of the Soul like Water, being hopeleſs of overcoming Troubles. When Water is frozen into hard Ice, it will bear a great Burden, but when 'tis diſſolved and melted, nothing is weaker. So the *Spirit of a Man* confirmed by religious Principles, *is able to ſuſtain all his Infirmities. Si fractus illabitur orbis*, if the Weight of the heavieſt Afflictions fall upon him, yet his Mind remains erect and unbroken, and bears them all with Courage and Conſtancy: But if through Impatience under Tribulation, and Diffidence in the Divine Promiſes, we ſhrink from our Duty, or reject *the Comforts of God as if they were ſmall*, and not proportionable to the Evils that oppreſs us; this is to faint when we are rebuked by him. Prov. 19. 14.

The Cauſes of this Deſpondency are uſually;

(1.) Either the kind of the Affliction: when there is a Singularity in the caſe, it increaſeth the Apprehenſion of God's Diſpleaſure; becauſe it may ſignify an extraordinary Guilt, and ſingular Unworthineſs in the Perſon that ſuffers; and upon that account, that Sorrow ſwells ſo high as to overwhelm him.

(2.) The number and degrees of Afflictions; when like thoſe black Clouds which in Winter-Days join together, and quite intercept the Beams of the Sun: ſo many Troubles meet at once, and deprive us of all preſent Comfort. *Job* loſt his Children by a ſudden unnatural Death; and was tormented in all the Parts of his Body, and reduced from his rich Abundance to the Dunghil, and a Potſherd to ſcrape his Boils. Indeed his Heroical Spirit was ſupported under thoſe numerous and grievous Troubles, but

but ſuch a Weight were enough to ſink the moſt.

(3.) The continuance of Afflictions. When the Clouds return after Rain, and the Life is a conſtant Scene of Sorrows, we are apt to be utterly dejected, and hopeleſs of Good. The Pſalmiſt tells us, *All the Day long I have been plagued, and chaſtened every Morning*; and from thence was ſtrongly tempted to Deſpair. Pſal. 73. 14.

(4.) Comparing their great Sufferings with the Proſperity of thoſe who are extreamly vicious, inclines ſome to Deſpair. For not only their preſent Evils are heightened, and more ſenſibly felt by the Compariſon, but the proſperous Impiety of others tempts them to think there is no juſt and powerful Providence that diſtributes things below; and looking no higher than to Second Cauſes, that are obvious to Senſe, they judg their State paſt Recovery.

III. The next thing is to prove, that 'tis the Duty and Wiſdom of the Afflicted not to Deſpiſe the Chaſtenings of the Lord, nor to faint under them.

Firſt, 'Tis their Duty carefully to avoid thoſe Extreams, becauſe they are very diſhonourable to God.

1. The Contempt of Chaſtiſements is high Profanation of God's Honour, who is our Father and Soveraign, and in that Quality afflicts us: 'Tis our Apoſtle's Argument,

Heb. 12. 9. *Furthermore, we have had Fathers of our Fleſh which corrected us, and we gave them Reverence; ſhall we not much more be ſubject to the Father of Spirits, and live?* 'Tis a Principle deeply planted in the Human Nature, which the moſt barbarous Nations have kept inviolable, to expreſs the realleſt Reſpect to our Parents, from whom we derive our Life, and by whoſe tender

tender Care we have been preſerved, and educated, altho their Diſcipline be rigorous: but it is infinitely more juſt and reaſonable, that we ſhould reverently ſubmit to the Father of Spirits, who hath the higheſt Right in us. As much as the immortal Spirit excels the infirm corruptible Fleſh, proportionably ſhould our Reverence to God, when he moſt ſharply rebukes us, exceed our Reſpects to our Earthly Fathers when they correct us. The manner of the Apoſtle's Expreſſion is very ſignificant, *Shall we not much rather?* If there be any vital ſpark of Conſcience remaining in our Breaſts, if Reaſon be not wholly declined to Brutiſhneſs, we cannot do otherwiſe.

2. Fainting under Chaſtenings reflects diſhonourably upon God. 'Tis true in ſome reſpect, thoſe who are extreamly dejected, are not ſo guilty as the Deſpiſers; for uſually

they acknowledg the Order and Juſtice of his Providence. But that falſe Conception of the Father of Mercies, either that he willingly afflicts the Children of Men, or that he hates them becauſe he afflicts them here, is ſo contrary to his holy Nature, and injurious to his Goodneſs, the ſpecial Character of his Nature, that 'tis an equal Provocation, with the ſlighting his Soveraignty.

1 Joh. 4. 9.

SER-

SERMON V.

HEBREWS xii. 5.

My Son, deſpiſe not thou the chaſtening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.

Secondly, I Shall proceed to prove, 'tis the beſt Wiſdom not to deſpiſe God's Chaſtenings, nor faint under them. I will not inſiſt upon the Conſideration that 'tis the Counſel of the ſupream Wiſdom to us, nor that 'tis the avoiding the vicious Extreams, which is the chiefeſt Point of Moral Prudence: but it is the only way to prevent the greateſt Miſchiefs that will

will otherwiſe befal us. 'Tis ſaid, he that is wiſe is profitable to himſelf, that is either in obtaining Good, or preventing Evils. Now it will
Job 22. 21. appear how pernicious thoſe Extreams are, by conſidering;

1. The Contempt of Chaſtenings, deprives us of all thoſe Benefits which were intended by them. God's End in them is to imbitter Sin to our Taſte, and make us diſreliſh that deadly Poiſon: for as, according to the Rules of Phyſick, Contraries are cured by Contraries; ſo Sin that prevails by Pleaſure, by ſomething delightful to the Carnal Part, is mortified by what is afflictive to Senſe. Repentance is a Duty that beſt complies with Affliction: for when the Spirit is made ſad, and brought to the Sobriety of Conſideration, it will more readily reflect upon the true Cauſes of Troubles; When the Springs overflow, 'tis but directing the Stream into

into a right Channel, the changing the Object of our Grief, *viz.* mourning for Sin inſtead of ſorrowing for outward Trouble, and we are in the way to Happineſs. Senſible Sorrow leads to Godly Sorrow. The natural is firſt, then the ſpiritual. Now the Deſpiſers of God's Hand, that are unaffected with Judgments, are incapable of this Benefit. For if they do not feel the Blow, how ſhall they take notice of the Hand that ſtrikes? If they are not ſoftened with Sorrows, how ſhall they receive the Divine Impreſſion? If they have no ſenſe of his Diſpleaſure, how ſhall they fear to offend him for the future? If the Medicine doth not work, how can it expel noxious Humours?

Fifthly. The neglect of Chaſtenings doth not only render them unprofitable, but expoſes to greater Evils.

(1.) It

(1.) It provokes God to withdraw his Judgments for a time. This the Sinner desired, and thinks himself happy that he is at ease: Miserable Delusion! This Respite is the Presage of his final Ruin. 'Twas the desperate State of *Judah*, as God
Isa. 1. 5. expresses it, *Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more.* The words of an anxious Father that has tried all Methods, Counsel, Kindness, Corrections to reclaim a rebellious obstinate Son; and finding no answerable Effect, gives him over to follow the pernicious swinge of his corrupt Desires. No Severity is like the suffering him in his licentious Courses. Thus when God hath used many gracious ways to reduce the Sinner, by his Word, Spirit and Judgments, but he is inflexible to the Calls of the Word, impenetrable to the Motions of the Spirit, and insensible of afflicting Providences; when after a Combate with

with the Rod, Sin comes off unwounded, and the Rod retires; this Calm is more dreadful than the fierceſt Storm; nothing can be more fatal to the Sinner, for by this Divine Deſertion he is given over to a reprobate Mind, and vile Affections; he goes on undiſturb'd in his Sins, and every day increaſeth his Enmity againſt God, and provokes God's Enmity againſt him. 'Tis not conceivable that one who is not made pliable to the Grace of God by Afflictions, ſhould ſubmit when he is in pleaſant Circumſtances, and diſpos'd to enjoy ſenſual Satisfactions. If the Whip and Spur cannot break and tame the unruly Beaſt, certainly the rich Paſture will never make him manageable. So that God's ceaſing to puniſh the Sinner at preſent is ſo far from being a Favour, that 'tis the Effect of his deepeſt Diſpleaſure; for it contributes to his hardning. 'Twas

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the Caſe of *Pharaoh*, when any of the Plagues were removed: Indulgence occaſioned his Induration. As Water taken from the Fire, freezes ſooner and harder, than if the thinner Parts had never been evaporated by the former Heat; ſo when Men are taken off from the Fire of Affliction, they are more confirmed in their vicious Courſes than if they had never been afflicted.

(2.) The ſlighting of lighter Strokes, provokes God ſometimes to bring more dreadful Judgments in this Life upon Sinners. No Man can endure that his Love or Anger ſhould be deſpiſed. *Nebuchadnezzar* commanded the Furnace to be heated ſeven times hotter for thoſe who contemned his Threatnings. God tells the *Iſraelites*, *If ye will not be reformed by theſe things, but will walk contrary unto me; Then will I alſo walk contrary unto you, and will puniſh*

Levit. 26. 23, 24.

puniſh you yet ſeven times for your Sins. He will change the Rods into Scorpions, and will ſcourge them for their continued Rebellions. 'Tis the intent of that Expoſtulation, *Shall one take up a Snare from the Earth, and have taken nothing at all?* Amos 3. 5. Shall God remove his Judgments while Sinners are careleſs and unreformed, as if they might be final Conquerors over them? no, he will multiply and greaten them. It may be at firſt God blaſts part of the Eſtate, and the Sinner is not apprehenſive of his Hand; then he comes nearer and ſnatches away a dear Relation: if ſtill the Sinner is unaffected, he ſtrikes his Body with a lingring, or acute Diſeaſe: if ſtill he be not concern'd for God's Diſpleaſure, he wounds his Spirit, makes him ſick in Senſe and Conſcience at the ſame time, fills him with Terror by the Reflection upon his wicked Ways, and the fore-ſight of

of that dreadful Tribunal before which he muſt appear; ſo that altho he cannot live, he dare not die; tho his Earthly Tabernacle be ready to fall upon him, he is afraid to go out and meet the ſupream Judg: and if this doth not work a ſincere thorow Change, God caſts him into Hell to the Company of the Giants, thoſe bold Rebels that fought againſt God. Briefly, as under the Law, an incorrigible Son that neglected his Father's Reproofs, was to die without Mercy; ſo an unreformed Sinner who kicks againſt the Pricks, and refuſes to ſubmit to God's Corrections, ſhall be cut off in his Obſtinacy; Juſtice will proceed to Exciſion, and Acts of Vengeance againſt him.

Prov. 21. 16.

Vid. Mr. *Mede* in loc.

(3.) Fainting under Chaſtenings is pernicious to Sufferers: for it renders them utterly indiſpoſed for the Performance of Duty, and unca-

uncapable of receiving the Comforts proper for an afflicted State.

1*ſt.* It renders them utterly indiſpoſed for the performance of Duty. Hope draws forth all the active Powers of the Soul; 'tis the great Motive to Diligence, and Inſtrument of Duty. Deſpair, like extremity of Cold that checks the Spring, and binds up the Earth that its Fruits cannot appear, hinders the free Exerciſe of Reaſon and Grace, and cuts the Sinews of Obedience. He that is hopeleſs of a good Iſſue out of Troubles, will neither repent, nor pray, nor reform, but indulges barren Tears inſtead of real Duties.

Beſides, it often falls out, that the ſame Affliction is ſent from God's Diſpleaſure upon his People for their Sins, and is the Effect of the Rage of Men againſt them up-

on the account of their profeſſing his Name. Such is the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God, that by the ſame fiery Trial he may refine his Servants from their Droſs and Impurities, and render the Glory of the Goſpel more *conſpicuous*. The Hatred of Religion, and a blind Fury may tranſport Men to Acts of Cruelty againſt the Saints; but 'tis by the permiſſion of the univerſal Soveraign, who hath the Hearts of all in his Hands, and ſuffers their Rage for holy Ends. The Enemy deſigns againſt their Faith, but God's Aim is to make them reform their Lives.

Now if either through ſtrong Fears, or the ſtinging ſenſe of Troubles upon the account of Religion, our Courage fails, we are preſently in danger of falling away, and denying our Maſter. The faint-hearted Perſon is uſually falſe-hearted,

hearted, and for want of Reſolution, being frighted out of his Conſcience and Duty, chooſes Sin rather than Suffering, and thereby juſtly deprives himſelf *of the Crown of Life*, that is promiſed only to *thoſe who are faithful unto the Death.* Beſides, not only the loſs of Heaven, but the Torments of Hell are threaten'd againſt thoſe who withdraw from the Service of God to avoid Temporal Evils. The *fearful and unbelieving are in the front of thoſe that ſhall have part in the Lake of Fire and Brimſtone, which is the ſecond Death.* Now what Folly is it when two Evils are propounded, to chooſe the greateſt; that is, Eternal Death rather than Temporal: and of two Goods to prefer the leſs; a ſhort Life with its Conveniences on Earth, before that which is eternally glorious in Heaven? By which it appears how much Rev. 21. 8.

it concerns us to fortify and fix our Minds by a ſtedfaſt Belief of God's ſupporting Preſence with us in all Troubles, and of his gracious Promiſe, that in due time we ſhall reap if we faint not in well-doing.

2*dly*. They are incapable of the Comforts proper to an afflicted State. Thoſe ariſe from the Be-
Rev. 3. lief, *that God loves whom he chaſtens*: for the leaſt Sin is a greater Evil than the greateſt Trouble; and his deſign is to take that away, and from the expectation of a happy Iſſue. Hope is the Anchor within the Vail, that in the midſt of Storms and rougheſt Seas, preſerves from Shipwrack. The Character of Chriſtians is, that they
Rom. 12. *are rejoicing in Hope*: But when the
12. Afflicted are under fearful Impreſſions that God is an irreconcile-

able

able Enemy, and ſadly conclude their Miſeries are paſt Redreſs, thoſe Divine Comforts that are able to ſweeten the moſt bitter Sufferings to Believers, are of no Efficacy. Their deep Sorrows are not like the Pains of a travailing Woman that end in a joyful Birth, but the killing Tortures of the Stone that are fruitleſs to the Patient. An obſtinate Grief, and rejecting the Conſolations of God, *is the beginning of Sorrows*, the firſt Payment of that ſad Arrear of mourning that ſhall be exacted in another World.

The Uſe ſhall be to excite us to thoſe Duties that are directly contrary to the Extreams forbidden, *viz.* To demean our ſelves under the Chaſtenings of the Lord with a deep Reverence and humble Fear of his Diſpleaſure, and with IV.

a firm Hope and Dependance upon him for a bleſſed Iſſue upon our complying with his holy Will.

1. With an humble Reverence of his Hand. This Temper is abſolutely neceſſary and moſt congruous with reſpect to God, upon the account of his Soveraignty, Juſtice and Goodneſs declar'd in his Chaſtenings; and with reſpect to our Frailty, our Dependance upon him, our Obnoxiouſneſs to his Law, and our Obligations to him, that he will pleaſe to afflict us for our good.

This is the reaſon of that Expoſtulation, *Will a Lion roar in the Foreſt, when he hath no Prey?* Shall God's Threatnings and Judgments have no Effect? *Who ever hardned himſelf againſt him, and proſpered? Do we provoke the Lord*

Amos 3. 4.

to

to *Jealouſy*, the moſt ſenſible and ſevere Attribute when it is incens'd? *Are we ſtronger than he?* Can we encounter offended Omnipotency? Can we with an Army of Luſts oppoſe Myriads of mighty Angels? 'Tis not Courage, but ſuch a prodigious degree of Folly and Fury, that one would think 'twere impoſſible a reaſonable Creature were capable of it. Yet every Sinner unreformed by Afflictions is thus deſperate: *He ſtretches out his Hand againſt God, and ſtrengthens himſelf againſt the Almighty; he runneth upon him, even on his Neck, upon the thick Boſſes of his Bucklers.* Such a furious Rebel was *Ahaz*, who *in the time of his Diſtreſs, did treſpaſs more againſt the Lord: This is that King* Ahaz! But God hath moſt ſolemnly declared, that he will be victorious at laſt over the moſt fierce obdurate Enemies. *As I live, ſaith*

Job 15. 25, 26.

2 Chron. 28.

the Lord, every Knee ſhall bow to me. His Power is Infinite, and Anger puts an Edg upon his Power, and makes it more terrible. If our Subjection be not voluntary, it muſt be violent. 'Tis our Wiſdom to prevent Acts of Vengeance by humble Submiſſions. The Duty of the Afflicted is excellently expreſt by *Elihu*: *Surely it is meet to be ſaid to God, I have born Chaſtiſements, I will not offend any more. That I know not, teach thou me: if I have done Iniquity, I will do ſo no more.*

Job 34. 31, 32.

Add further, upon another account Reverence is due to God's Chaſtenings: for when Love is the Motive that incites one to give us Counſel, tho it be mixt with Reproofs, and his Prudence is not great, yet a Reſpect is due to the Affection. Now God who is only wiſe, chaſtiſes Men from a deſire to

to make them better and happy; he intends primarily to refine, not to conſume them by Afflictions: ſo that a ſerious regard to his Hand is the moſt juſt and neceſſary Duty of the Creature. Briefly, every Chaſtiſement ſhould leave deep and permanent Impreſſions upon us; the Senſe of God's Diſpleaſure ſhould make our Hearts mournful and mollified, broken and contrite, that his Will may be done by us on Earth as it is in Heaven.

2. Let us always preſerve an humble Dependance and firm Hope on God, for a bleſſed Iſſue out of all our Troubles: The Support and Tranquillity of the Soul ariſeth from hence. Chriſtian Patience ſuffers all things as well as Charity, being incouraged by a continual expectation of Good from him.

Patience

Patience confirms all other Graces, and is to the whole Armour of God, what the Temper is to material Weapons, that keeps them from breaking in the Combat. Now to maintain a conſtant Hope in Affliction, 'tis neceſſary to conſider the Reaſon of the Exhortation as 'tis admirably amplified by the Apoſtle.

(1.) The Relation God ſuſtains when he afflicts Believers. He is a Judg inveſted with the Quality of a Father. The Covenant of Grace between God and Jeſus Chriſt, our true *David*, contains this obſervable Clauſe, *If thy Children forſake my Law, and walk not in my Judgments: If they break my Statutes, and keep not my Commandments; then will I viſit their Tranſgreſſions with a Rod, and their Iniquity with Stripes,*

Pſal. 89. 30, 31, 32.

The

The Love that ariſeth from this Relation, tho it cannot hate, yet it may be diſpleaſed, and chaſtiſe them for their Follies. *Moſes* tells the *Iſraelites*, *Thou ſhalt conſider in thy Heart, that as a Man chaſtens his Son, ſo the Lord thy God chaſtens thee.* Deut. 8. 5. In Children Reaſon is not fully diſclouded, they are not capable to govern themſelves, and are only taught with ſenſible Pleaſure or Pain: So that a Father is obliged to join Correction with Inſtruction, to form them to Vertue. This is ſo far from being inconſiſtent with Paternal Affection, that 'tis inſeparable from it. For a Parent to ſuffer a Child to go on pleaſantly in Sin without due Puniſhment, is pure Cruelty diſguiſed under the Mask of Pity: for by the neglect of Diſcipline he is confirm'd in his vicious Courſes, and expoſed to Ruin. The Apoſtle therefore adds,

Whom

Whom the Lord loves, he chaſtens: As from the ſevereſt Wrath he ſometimes forbeareth to ſtrike, ſo from deareſt Love he afflicts. Humble Believers through a Cloud of Tears may ſee the Light of God's Countenance: for having elected them by ſpecial Love to a glorious Inheritance above, he diſpenſeth all things here in order to the preparing them for it; and all Temporal Evils, as Means, are transform'd into the Nature of the End to which they are ſubſervient. So that the ſharpeſt Sufferings are really from God's Favour, ſince they are beneficial for our obtaining real Happineſs. The Devil uſually tempts Men in a Paradiſe of Delights, to precipitate them into Hell: God tries them in the Furnace of Afflictions, to purify and prepare them for Heaven.

(2.) 'Tis

(2.) 'Tis a ſtrong Cordial againſt fainting, to conſider that by virtue of the Paternal Relation *he ſcourges every Son whom he receives*: for no Troubles are more afflictive and ſtinging than thoſe that are unexpected. Now when we are aſſured that there is no Son whom the Heavenly Father doth not chaſten, we are leſs ſurprized when we meet with Croſſes. Indeed there is hardly any kind of Affliction that may befal us, but we have ſome inſtance in Scripture of the Saints ſuffering the ſame. Are we poor and mean in the World? we ſhould conſider that Poverty with Holineſs is a Divine Complexion: Jeſus Chriſt the holy and beloved Son of God, had not where to lay his Head. Are we under bodily Diſtempers? good *Hezekiah* was ſtruck with an uncomfortable Diſeaſe

Diſeaſe as to the Quality of it; and *Gaius* had a flouriſhing Soul in a languiſhing Body. Are our dear Relations taken away? *Aaron* and *David* loſt ſome of their Sons by terrible Strokes. Are our Spirits wounded with the ſenſe of God's Diſpleaſure? *Job* and *Heman* were under ſtrong Terrors, yet the Favourites of Heaven. Briefly, how many moſt dear to God were called forth to extream and bloody Trials for Defence of the Truth? How many Deaths did they endure in one Torment? How many Torments in one Death? yet they were ſo far from fainting, that the more their Pains were exaſperated, the more their Courage and Joy was ſhining and conſpicuous; as the Face of the Heavens is never more ſerene and clear, than when the ſharpeſt North Wind blows. 'Tis the Apoſtle's Inference, *Seeing*

we

we are compaſſed with ſuch a Cloud of Witneſſes, let us run with Patience the Race that is ſet before us.

This is further enforc'd by the following words, *If ye be without Chaſtening, whereof all are partakers, then are ye Baſtards, and not Sons.* If God doth not vouchſafe us the Mercy of his Rod, 'tis evident we are not part of his Fatherly Care. The Bramble is neglected, while the Vine is cut till it bleeds. 'Tis a miſerable Privilege to be exempted from Divine Diſcipline, and by Eaſe and Proſperity to be corrupted and made fit for Deſtruction. St. *Auſtin* repreſents one expoſtulating with God: *O Deus, iſta eſt Juſtitia tua, ut mali floreant, & boni laborent!* O God, it is righteous with Thee, that the Wicked ſhould proſper, and the Good ſuffer! *Dicis Deo, iſta eſt Juſtitia tua? & Deus tibi, iſta eſt Fides tua? hæc enim tibi promiſi?*

Ver. 8.

In Pſal. 25.

ad

ad hoc Chriſtianus factus es, ut in ſeculo iſto floreres, & in inferno poſtea torquereris? God replies to him, Is this your Faith? Did I promiſe you Temporal Proſperity? Were you a Chriſtian for this, that you might flouriſh in this World, and be miſerably tormented in Hell?

Ver. 9. The Apoſtle repreſents the ſpecial Prerogative of God *as the Father of Spirits*, and ſo hath a nearer Claim to us than the Fathers of our Fleſh, and that he is not liable to thoſe Imperfections that attend the Earthly Relations. *They for a few days chaſtened us for their own Pleaſure.* Human Love is a troubled irregular Paſſion, mixt with Ignorance, and prone to Error in the Exceſs or Defect. Sometimes Parents are indulgent, and by a cruel Compaſſion ſpare their Children when they are faulty: ſometimes they correct without Cauſe,

Cauſe, ſometimes when the Reaſon is juſt, yet they err in the manner or meaſure of the Correction, ſo that their Children are diſcouraged. But in God there is a perfect Union of Wiſdom and Love, of Diſcretion and Tenderneſs; his Affection is without the leaſt Imperfection. His Will is always guided by infinite Wiſdom. If his Children offend, he will chaſtiſe them with the Rod of Men, that is, moderately: for as in Scripture things are magnified by the Epithet, Divine or of God, ſo they are leſſened by the Epithet, Human. Accordingly the Apoſtle declares to the *Corinthians*, that *no Temptation had befallen them, but ſuch as is common to Man: but God is faithful, who will not ſuffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the Temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that ye may be able to*

2 Sam. 7. 14.

1 Cor. 10, 13.

bear it. As a prudent Phyſician conſults the Strength of the Patient as well as the Quality of the Diſeaſe, and proportions his Medicine; ſo all the bitter Ingredients, their Mixture and Meaſure, are diſpens'd by the wiſe Preſcription of God, according to the degrees of Strength that are in his People.

The Apoſtle ſpecifies the immediate End of God in his Chaſtenings: *But he for our Profit, that we may be partakers of his Holineſs.* This is the ſupream Excellency of the Divine Nature, and our Conformity to it is ſo valuable, that it renders Afflictions not only tolerable, but ſo far deſirable as they contribute to it. In the preſent State our Graces are imperfect, and our Conformity to the Divine Purity is like the Reſemblance of the Sun in a watry Cloud, very much

much beneath the Perfection and Radiancy of that great Light. Now God is pleaſed to faſhion us according to his Image by Afflictions. As a Statue is cut by the Artificer, to bring it into a beautiful Form.

He is pleaſed to bring us into divers Temptations to try our Faith, to work in us Patience, to inflame our Prayers, to mortify our Carnal Deſires, to break thoſe voluntary Bonds whereby we are fettered to the Earth, that we may live with thoſe Affections wherewith others die. And certainly if we make a true Judgment of things, we have not the leaſt cauſe to ſuſpect the Love of God when he chaſtiſes us, to take away Sin the only abominable Object of his Hatred and deep Deteſtation, and to render us Partakers of the Divine Nature.

And the preſent peaceable Fruit of Righteouſneſs is the Product in thoſe who are duly exerciſed by their Troubles. It is an Alluſion to the Reward of the Conquerors in the Olympick Games, who had a Crown of Olives, the Emblem and Shadow of Peace. But true Peace, a Divine Calm in the Conſcience, ſhall be the Recompence of all that exerciſe their Graces ſutable to an afflicted State. In ſhort, the Apoſtle aſſures Believers, that they are *chaſtened of the Lord, to prevent their Condemnation with the World.* The correcting Rod delivers them from Hell. This Conſideration changes Thorns into Roſes, and extracts Honey out of Wormwood: if the way be ſtony or ſhowery that leads to Bleſſedneſs, a Chriſtian ſhould willingly walk in it. To conclude; from the Conſideration of what the

1 Cor. 11. 32.

the Scripture declares concerning Temporal Evils, let us *lift up the Hands that hang down, and the feeble Knees; and make ſtreight Paths for our Feet, leſt that which is lame be turned out of the Way; but let it rather be healed*: *i. e.* In our Affliction, let us take Courage and Reſolution from the Promiſes, and live in a holy Conformity to God's Will, that the weak or faint may be reſtored.

The firſt and laſt Leſſon of Pagan Philoſophy was to ſupport Men under the Storms to which they are liable in this open State, to render the Soul *velut Pelagi rupes immota*, as a Rock unſhaken by the Waves.

But all their Directions were unſucceſsful, and ſo could not ſecure them from Impatience or Deſpair.

Deſpair. But the Goſpel that aſſures us of the Love of God in ſending Afflictions for our Spiritual and Eternal Good, is alone able to compoſe the Mind. And whenever we faint in Troubles, 'tis either from Infidelity or Inconſideration; 'tis impoſſible a Perſon ſhould be a Chriſtian, and be incapable of Comfort in the moſt afflicted State: for we are really ſo by the holy Spirit, who is the Comforter. When we ſpeak ſometimes to thoſe we judg infirm, we ſpeak to Infidels, who only receive Remedy from Time which they ought to receive from Faith; they they have the Name of God only in their Mouths, but the World is in their Hearts. Their Paſſions are ſtrong and obſtinate, not ſubject to ſanctified Reaſon. The Difficulty they have of being comforted, diſcovers the neceſſity of their

their being afflicted. They need Converſion more than Conſolation; others, who are ſincere in Faith, yet are apt to faint under Troubles, from an Error like that of the Apoſtles; when their Lord came upon the Waters in a ſtormy tempeſtuous Night to their Aſſiſtance, they thought he was a Spirit. So they look on God as an Enemy, when he comes to ſanctify and ſave them: the Soveraign Remedy of our Sorrows is to correct the Judgment of Senſe by a ſerious Belief of God's Promiſe. Thus we ſhall reconcile the roughneſs of his Hand with the ſweetneſs of his Voice: he calls to us from Heaven in the darkeſt Night, *'Tis I, be not afraid.* He corrects us with the Heart and Hand of a Father.

A due Conſideration of theſe things will produce a glorified Joy in

in the midſt of our Sufferings.

Rom. 15. 4. *Whatſoever things were written aforetime, were written for our Learning, that we through Patience and Comfort of the Scriphtures might have Hope.*

SER-

SERMON VI.

LUKE xiv. 23.

The Lord ſaid to the Servant, Compel them to come in, that my Houſe may be full.

OUR Bleſſed Saviour in the days of his Humility, among other Inſtances of his admirable Condeſcenſion, was pleaſed in his Sermons to ſtoop to the Capacity of the Hearers, and inſtruct them in a familiar eaſy way. The infirm Eye of Fleſh cannot behold Spiritual Things in their immediate Purity and Glory, but as ſhadowed under ſenſible Compariſons. Therefore his excellent Goodneſs made uſe of Parables, to illuſtrate and explain by Repreſen-

tations and Patterns borrowed from things common and known, things of a ſublimer Nature, and more diſtant from our Apprehenſions: and by this ingaging lively manner to awaken the Spirit to conſider by what is ſaid, what is ſignified: and to inſinuate into the Affections Divine Truths ſo pleaſingly conveyed to us.

Now of all the Parables in the Goſpel, this of the Marriage-Feaſt, both in reſpect of the Excellence of the Matter, and the manner of Expreſſion ſutable to our Capacity, deſerves the ſerious Application of our Minds and Hearts. I will make ſome Obſervations upon it, that may be uſeful and introductive to the following Diſcourſe.

Two general Parts are to be conſidered, in it: *viz.*

I. The

I. The Narrative of the Preparations, and the Perſons invited to the Feaſt.

II. The Succeſs of the Invitation.

In unfolding theſe Generals, I ſhall conſider the Subſtance of the Parable, without ſtraining it by far-fetch'd Parallels beyond the Intention of our Saviour. 'Tis a curious Folly to turn every Figure in Scripture into an Allegory. The Parable is the ſame in Subſtance with that in the 22*d* Chapter of St. *Matthew*, from the 2*d* Verſe to the 15*th*: that indeed has more of Circumſtance and Magnificence in the Relation. The *certain Man that made the Feaſt is there ſtiled a King*, that is, the bleſſed God; *and the Feaſt is for the Marriage of his Son*: Under this Figure of a Royal Marriage is repreſented the Myſtical

Marriage between Chriſt and his Church, and the Type is infinitely excell'd by the Reality. If we conſider the Perſons join'd in this Divine Alliance, the Son of God, of the ſame Nature, of equal and eternal Greatneſs with his Father, to unite himſelf to ſinful miſerable Creatures in a Conjugal Relation, the moſt tender and entire, What an immenſe diſtance was to be overcome? What a ſeeming Diſparagement was it to him? In order to this it was neceſſary there ſhould be a Conformity of Nature between us: he therefore *was made Fleſh, that we might be one Spirit with him*: he aſſumed our Nature in a Perſonal Union to the Diety, that he might marry our Perſons in a Spiritual Union. He was a Saviour to redeem us, that he might be a Husband to inrich us. Aſtoniſhing Love! The Lord of Glory, higher than the Heavens, ſtoop'd

ſo

ſo low as to eſpouſe poor Duſt: he gave his Life for us, and himſelf to us for ever. What Honour and Happineſs accrues to us by this Alliance! the Lord of Angels is our Husband. His Gifts are anſwerable to his Love: he is Heir of all things, and endows his Church with Heaven and Earth: the Apoſtle aſſures Believers all things *are yours, and you are Chriſt's, and Chriſt is God's.* Our Communion with him is ſo perfect, that he diſcharges us of all the Evils that we cannot bear, our Sins and the Curſe due to them, by taking them upon himſelf, and beſtows upon us all the Bleſſings and Bleſſedneſs we are capable to enjoy, *Wiſdom, Righteouſneſs, Sanctification and Redemption.*

By the great Supper prepar'd, we are to underſtand the Manifeſtation of the Meſſiah, with all the moſt precious and unvaluable Benefits purchaſed and conferr'd by him

upon Believers; the Pardon of Sins, Adoption into God's Family, the Graces and Comforts of the Spirit, and eternal Glory, the becoming Teſtimonies of his Greatneſs and Love.

The prime Gueſts invited to this Feaſt are the Jews, the ſelect People of God, *to whom pertained the* Rom. 9. 4, 5. *Adoption, and the Glory, and the Covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the Service of God, and the Promiſes: Whoſe are the Fathers, and of whom concerning the Fleſh Chriſt came, who is over all, God bleſſed for ever.* When other Nations were excluded from the Alliance of God, his Preſence and Worſhip was their Privilege, and for them this Feaſt was principally intended.

The Servants employed in the Invitation were, firſt, *Moſes* and the Prophets, incluſively to *John* the Baptiſt; all *to whom the Oracles* Rom. 3. 2. *of God were committed*, and by whom the

the eternal Counſels of his Wiſdom were declar'd concerning the Meſſias. All their Prophecies, as ſo many Lines, meet in this Centre. The other Servants were the Apoſtles, who were commanded *to preach the Goſpel firſt at* Jeruſalem. The firſt order of Servants, and the ſecond, both propoſed the ſame Meſſias, as the Object of our Faith and Love; but the Prophets under Shadows and Figures in the Promiſes, the Apoſtles clearly in the Truth and Accompliſhment. The firſt invited while the Preparations were making; but the Evangelical Miniſters are more earneſt and preſſing, *Come, for all things are now ready.* And in comparing theſe two Periods of Time, there is the moſt ſhining and ſenſible Evidence of the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion: for the Marks of it are clear in the Prophecies by their exact References to the Accompliſh-

Deut. 18. Pſal. 2. Iſa. 40. Luke 24.

ment in the Perſon of Chriſt; and they are clear in the Accompliſhment by the Correſpondence to the Prophecies. Who can ſuſpend Aſſent that our Redemption by Jeſus Chriſt is the Work of Divine Providence, when the deſign of it is ſo exactly delineated in the Prophecy?

Thus the unchangeable Firmneſs and Stability of God's Counſel is the Foundation of our Faith. The Conſummation of the Marriage will be at the ſecond coming of Chriſt.

II. The Succeſs of the Invitation is related, *They all with one Conſent began to make Excuſe. The firſt ſaid, I have bought a piece of Ground, and I muſt needs go to ſee it: Another ſaid, I have bought five Yoke of Oxen, and go to prove them*: And another ſaid, *I have married a Wife, and I cannot come.* All the Carnal

Luke 14. 18, 19, 20.

Affecti-

Affections are readily and preſently conſpiring in the refuſal. It may ſeem that the Allegations of a Purchaſe and Marriage for not coming to a Feaſt were very reaſonable: but the Feaſt repreſents Celeſtial Happineſs, in compariſon of which all the Profits and Pleaſures of this World are but Loſs and Dung: 'Tis evident then, their Excuſes are ſtrong Accuſations of their Folly and Ingratitude: Of Folly in preferring Shadows before ſubſtantial Felicity, Moments before Eternity: Of Ingratitude, in rejecting contumelioufly the moſt gracious and earneſt Offer of ſuch a Happineſs. This is ſpoken of the Jews, who lived in the time of the Son of God's Deſcent for the Salvation of Men: The love of the World cauſed them to deſpiſe his mean Appearance, and neglect the Call of humble Mercy. Upon their refuſal, *the Servant came and ſhewed* Ver. 21. *his*

his Lord theſe things; Then the Maſter of the Houſe being Angry, ſaid to his Servant, Go out quickly into the Streets and Lanes of the City, and bring in hither the Poor, and the Maimed, and the
Ver. 22. *Halt, and the Blind. And the Servant ſaid, Lord, it is done as thou haſt com-*
Ver. 23. *manded, and yet there is Room. And the Lord ſaid unto the Servant, Go out into the High-ways and Hedges, and compel them to come in, that my Houſe*
Ver. 24. *may be filled. For I ſay unto you, that none of thoſe Men that were bidden, ſhall taſte of my Supper.*

The Refuſers are for ever excluded from the Joy of this Royal Feaſt, being as unworthy as unwilling to partake of it. This Judgment is ſtill viſible upon the Nation of the Jews, who conſent to their Progenitors rejecting and condemning the Meſſias, and will not be convinced of the obſtinate Impoſture that was deviſed to prevent the Belief of his Reſurrection. But it did

did not become the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God, that ſuch coſtly Preparations ſhould be loſt: it was requiſite that ſome Perſons ſhould actually come to the Feaſt, that is, obey the Heavenly Call, and receive the Goſpel; for otherwiſe the Redemption the Son of God ſo dearly acquir'd, had been without Fruit, he had died in vain, which is directly contrary to the Promiſe of God to him. *I will give thee for a Light to the Gentiles, that thou mayſt be my Salvation to the ends of the Earth.* Accordingly the Servant is ordered to bring in the *Poor, the Lame, and the Blind, and to go into the High-ways and Hedges, and compel them to come in, that the Houſe may be filled.* Theſe Expreſſions declare the extream Miſery of the Heathens, who were at that time *without Chriſt, Aliens from the Commonwealth of* Iſrael, *Strangers from the Covenants of Promiſe, having no Hope, and*

Iſa. 4. 9, 6.

Epheſ. 2. 12.

and without God in the World.

Compel them to come in. The Papiſts allege this Text to give colour to their Cruelty, in their violent ways of making Proſelytes to their Idolatry. Their convincing Arguments are Swords, and Racks, and Gibbets, and Fires. If this be a proper Method of converting Men to Religion, the greateſt Tyrants are the moſt infallible Teachers. The Vanity and Impiety of the Pretence will appear by conſidering,

1. 'Tis ridiculous to Reaſon, to uſe forcible Means for ſuch an End: for the Underſtanding is a reaſonable Faculty, and can only be convinc'd by inſtructing Reaſons. It cannot judg of things but as they appear, nor aſſent againſt its Judgment. Indeed Threatnings and Tortures may make Men Infidels, but not ſincere Believers: it may make them Hypocrites and Comedians

in

in Religion, but not unfeigned Profeſſors. This is abundantly exemplified in *France*, where the vaſt number of ſervile Converts have been made by their Dragoons, not their Doctors.

2. This is moſt contrary to the Practice of our Saviour, and to the Spirit of the Goſpel. The Sword that Chriſt uſeth in ſubduing his Enemies, and making them willing Subjects to his Scepter, *goes out of his Mouth.* His Kingdom was introduced into the World by Preaching and Miracles, by doing Good and ſuffering Evil: he open'd the way for the Goſpel not by killing his Enemies, but by dying himſelf and in his Members: The eſtabliſhing and enlarging his Religion are by ſutable means, the Illumination of Mens Minds, the Perſwaſion of their Wills, the drawing of their Affections to embrace it. Accordingly the Apoſtle Rev. 19. 15.

tells

2 Cor. 10. 4, 5. tells us, *The Weapons of our Warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of ſtrong Holds; Caſting down Imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth it ſelf againſt the Knowledg of God, and bringing into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Chriſt.* The Weapons are ſutable to the Warfare, and the Warfare to the Kingdom, which is ſpiritual, *not of this World.* The uſing of Force to conſtrain Men to embrace the Chriſtian Religion, is contrary to the Love, the Goodneſs, Meekneſs, Clemency and Benignity, the bleſſed Temper the Goſpel plants in the Breaſts of Chriſtians. How ſeverely did our Saviour rebuke the fiery Spirit in *James* and *John*? *You know not what manner of Spirit you are of; the Son of Man came not to deſtroy Mens Lives, but to ſave them.* 'Tis contrary to the Golden Rule given to all his Diſciples, *What you would*

Luke 9. 55.

have

have others do to you, do you to them.

But this muſt be acknowledged, that 'tis very congruous that the Papiſts make uſe of the material Sword, when *the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God,* ſtrikes through the Heart of Popery. The Doctrine of the Maſs is a clear Contradiction to the Scripture, and a notorious derogating from the Value and Virtue of Chriſt's Death: they ſay 'tis an unbloody Sacrifice of Chriſt, propitiatory for the Living and the Dead: Whereas our Saviour was offered up but once, the Maſs is ten thouſand times in a day repeated. Chriſt's Sacrifice was with Blood, and an unbloody Sacrifice is not propitiatory, nor can *obtain Remiſſion.* Where can they find in Scripture the Religious Worſhip of the Saints? They ſet up an infinite number of Interceſſors, and rob

rob our Saviour of his Glory, as if he were defective either in his Compassionate Love to us, for whom he mediates, or in his Power with God. They prefer his Mother before him in dispensing Mercy of which Sinners have the most need: they represent him as strict and severe, but she is composed of Sweetness, he is the Judg, she the Advocate and Saviour; we will leave them to the jealous God.

I shall only observe farther, that many erring Sects preserve their Allegiance to the Divine Authority in the Scripture, for they do not assume an Infallibility to themselves, but mistake the Sense of Scripture: but the Papists by asserting that the Authority of Scripture depends upon the Testimony of their Church, that is, the Sun borrows its Beams from her Eyes, and by arrogating an Infallibility to it, do in effect renounce Homage to the Authority

of

of God in his Word. And from hence it is that the Adherers to that Religion are ſo inconvincible: tho Senſe, Reaſon and Scripture diſcover their Doctrines to be plainly impoſſible. Their Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation involves ſuch Contradictions as deſtroy the Eſſence and End of Miracles: Their Doctrine of the Pope's Supremacy implies there are two Monarchs of one Kingdom, two Heads of one Body, two Husbands of one Spouſe. No Errors are more ſtrong and fatal than ſuch as are arm'd with Authority, eſpecially if that Authority be eſteem'd ſacred. But to return from this Digreſſion, tho not impertinent.

Compel them to come in. The word ſignifies the uſe of all conſtraining Motives, and the moſt earneſt Intreaties that are congruous to prevail upon thoſe who are invited to a Feaſt. The ſame word is uſed

Mat. 14. 22. *And Jeſus conſtrained his Diſciples to get into a Ship*; which certainly was not by violent driving or drawing them, but by his commanding Authority. So 'tis related of the two that were with our Saviour in the Journey to *Emmaus*,
Luke 24. 29. that they *conſtrained him to abide with them*: The Conſtraint was by earneſt Intreaties, far from Force. The ſame word is uſed of *Peter's* com-
Gal. 2. 14. pelling the *Gentiles to live after the Rites of the Jews*: that was by his Example. Thus the Nations were compelled to receive the Goſpel by the Apoſtles, the Ambaſſadors for Chriſt, who did ardently, *in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon*, pray them in Chriſt's ſtead to be reconciled to God. Their Doctrine was recommended by the Holineſs of their Lives, and confirmed by the Luſtre of their Miracles. In ſhort, the Expreſſion ſignifies how pleaſing it is to God, that thoſe who are invited

vited by the Offers of Grace in the Goſpel, ſhould come to Chriſt to obtain Life: and that the Invitation ſhall be effectual in the Hearts of thoſe who belong to the Election of Grace.

The Propoſition that I ſhall inſiſt on is this:

'Tis the great Duty of the Miniſters of Chriſt to uſe their beſt Endeavours, to inſtruct and perſwade Men to embrace the ſaving Mercies of the Goſpel.

The Commiſſion was immediately given to the Apoſtles, but extends to the end of the World, till the Miniſtration of the Goſpel ſhall ceaſe. I will explicate the Doctrine in this order.

I. Conſider what is implied, the Averſneſs in Men from conſenting

ſenting to the Terms of Salvation offered in the Goſpel.

II. The Means by which they are wrought on, and induced to come to the Celeſtial Feaſt.

III. Prove that 'tis the great Duty of the Miniſters of Chriſt to apply themſelves with a holy Zeal to bring Men to partake of the ſaving Mercies revealed in the Goſpel.

I. There is an Averſeneſs implied in the Expreſſion, *Compel them to come in.* This will be evident by conſidering, that the World, the Fleſh, and Satan, are Enemies in Combination againſt the Souls of Men, and raiſe an Army of Objections againſt their ſubmitting to the Terms of the Goſpel.

1. The World is the general Temptation: the natural World, and the corrupt World, the Things and

and Men of the World hinder our coming to Chriſt.

1ſt. The natural World, compriſing all the Creatures in it, was originally very good, both in reſpect of the Things themſelves, and their deſigned Uſe: for they were beneficial to Man, in order to his ſerving and enjoying the bleſſed God. But ſince his Fall from the State of unſtain'd Nature, they are accidentally evil to him. *The Creatures are made ſubject to Vanity, not willingly*: they are perverted from their innocent uſe, to foment and gratify Mens vicious Appetites. Therefore the Apoſtle declares, *the whole Creation groans and travels in Pain, is in a kind of Agony ready to faint, not for the Labour, but the Indignities they ſuffer.* The Charge that God faſtens upon Idolaters, is true againſt Worldly Men: *Ye have taken my Silver, and my Gold, and have carried into your Temples my goodly* Rom. 8.

pleaſant things. The Riches, the Pleaſures, the Greatneſs and Glory of the World are the Idols of their Heads and Hearts. The Interpoſition of the Earth darkens their Minds, eclipſes their Eſteem of the Fruition of God as their only Happineſs; the Love of it alienates and eſtranges their Affections from him, their Truſt in it ſlackens their due Dependance upon him. From hence it is, that the World, which, made by God, was a fair and bright Theatre of his Perfections, to raiſe the Thoughts and Affections of Men with Delight and Wonder to the bleſſed Creator, as 'tis manag'd by Satan, and abus'd by the Luſts of Men, *is the Shadow of Death:* ſuch as ſome Trees caſt, that not only intercept the refreſhing Light of the Sun, but ſhed a malignant contagious Influence. Strange Alteration!

The World is preſent and ſenſible, and makes an eaſy entrance into

into the Boſoms of Men. Their Souls are ſurpriz'd and deceived by the Suggeſtions of the Senſes, that repreſent earthly things as great Realities: ſpiritual and future things are to them but matters of Fancy and Conceit. The preſent and ſucceeding World are like Counterballances; as the one riſes, the other ſinks in Mens Opinions. When the World has got Poſſeſſion of them, it commands and captivates all their Powers and Faculties. All the Preaching in the World is in vain, a Throng of Buſineſs or looſe Diverſions cauſes the neglect of the great Salvation. Repreſent to them the attractive Mercies of God, his melting Bowels open'd in the Goſpel to all repenting Sinners; they are unmoved, frozen in their Dregs. Remember them, that their Bodies are dying every day, and their Souls are already dead, and that without ſincere coming to Chriſt they can-

not be recovered to the Life of Grace and Glory, 'tis in vain: tell them, they muſt ſhortly appear before the dread Lord of Spirits, and be accountable for all things done in this World, and the Conſequence will be eternal; all is in vain: they have other Affairs, other Deſires, which they regard and purſue; they are toſt in the Labyrinth of the World, and have no Time nor Inclination to ſecure their main Intereſt.

'Tis further obſervable, from the Excuſes alleged in the Parable of a Purchaſe, and a Marriage, and as 'tis ſaid in *Mat.* 22. *That the Invited made light of it, one went to his Farm, and another to his Merchandiſe*; that thoſe Temptations of the World are moſt perſwaſive and fatal to Men, that ſeem to be very natural and innocent. For what Duty is more clearly natural and reaſonable than to make Proviſion of Supplies ſuitable.

ble to their Condition and State, to their Charge and Families? 'Tis true, Conſcience and Prudence require that Men ſhould be diligent in their Callings, for the Support and Comfort of the preſent Life. *But the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Righteouſneſs that leads to it, muſt be ſought in the firſt place.* The brighteſt Valuations, the moſt inflam'd Affections, the moſt vigorous and conſtant Endeavours are due to Heaven. Now the Minds and Faculties of Men are limited, and cannot with intenſe and equal Ardency apply themſelves to various Objects. If the World be the main Object of their Care and Counſel, the Vigor of their leading and inſtrumental Faculties will be leſs free and active for Heaven: And from hence it is, that the Affairs and Engagements of this World, tho immediately they do not deprive Men of Heaven, yet medi-

mediately they are deſtructive to them; for they leſſen their Eſteem, cool their Affections, ſlack their Endeavours to obtain it: they oppreſs their Spirits, ingroſs their Time, that they have no leiſure to *work out their own Salvation:* They make them receptive of many Temptations, which wound their Souls to Death for ever. The conſtant Spring of the Sins and Miſery of Men is from hence, they have forgot the regular uſe of the Creatures, as Means and Motives of their aſcending to God; they underſtand not the Rule of Wiſdom, to make Temporal Things ſubordinate to Eternal; they have loſt the happy Temper of not totally declining the World, nor of eager embracing it. In ſhort, they would enjoy the World, and only uſe God in their Exigencies. 'Tis therefore inculcated in Scripture, *That the Friends of the World are the Enemies of*

of God, and that the Love of the World is inconſiſtent with the Love of the Father. 'Tis a moſt dangerous Sin, being ſo hardly diſcernable, and hardly cur'd: for the more appearance there is of Reaſon and the leſs of Senſuality in a Sin, the more it inſinuates and prevails. We uſually judg of Sins by the Foulneſs of the external Act, but the Guilt of it principally ariſes from its inward Contrariety to God. The Love of the World dethrones God in the Hearts of Men: other Sins diſhonour him in breaking his Laws, this reproaches him as leſs worthy of our Reſpects. When it has free Dominion, it will as certainly, tho ſilently, deſtroy the Souls of thoſe who are of a fair Reputation in the Eyes of Men, as the Riots of notorious Sinners will be their Ruine.

2*dly.* The corrupt World, thoſe who are ſtiled the *Children of this World*,

World, by their Example, and by their Oppoſition, are Obſtacles in the way to Heaven.

(1.) By Example: for the broad Way is beaten by the Multitude, and few ſtrive *to enter in at the ſtrait Gate that leads to Eternal Life.* Now Men eaſily receive the Impreſſion of Example. Of this there is palpable Evidence; for when Sins are common, the numbers of the Guilty diminiſh the Senſe and Shame of the Guilt. But if Conſcience be ſometimes unquiet, they ſmother the Sparks of Conviction in their Breaſts, and make a reſolute Reckoning they ſhall be in no worſe condition than others. Miſerable Comfort! as if one tortur'd on a Rack could receive any Mitigation of his Pains, by the ſight of many others ſuffering the ſame Torture. So contagious are the Faſhions and Manners of the World, that a principal end of our Saviour's Death

Death was to *deliver us from this preſent evil World*: that is, not from the Place, but from the depraved State, and ſinful Practices of the Men of the World. The Apoſtle *Peter* remembers Believers, *Ye know that ye are not redeemed with corruptible things, as Silver and Gold, from your vain Converſation, received by Tradition from your Fathers; but with the precious Blood of Chriſt as of a Lamb without Blemiſh and without Spot.* So deep was the Pollution, it could only be waſh'd out in that precious Fountain. The Principles and Ways of the World have a mighty Influence to blind and harden Men in Conformity to them. The Heathen Idolatries and Impurities were continued ſo long in the World, being commended and eſtabliſh'd by publick Cuſtom: and accordingly the Apoſtle tells the Epheſians, *they in time paſt walked according to the courſe of the World.*

Gal. 1.

1 Pet. 1.

Now

Now to apply this more closely to the present Subject: 'tis visible by the Conversation of Men in the World, that their Aims, their Appetites, their Endeavours are terminated in the World: their Souls cleave to it, the Train and Tendency of their Actions leads to it. A superficial Tincture of Religion, a Complemental Visit to God sometimes in publick Worship, contents the most; but their Thoughts, their Time and Strength are spent to obtain and enjoy the present World; for 'tis esteem'd their main Interest, and Heaven is only sought by the by, as an Accession to their Felicity. Now we usually approve and affect things according to common Opinions and Practice, tho unreasonable and exorbitant. The Psalmist speaking of the gathering uncertain Riches, observes, *this their way*
Psal. 49. *is their Folly, yet their Posterity approve their Sayings*: they imitate the Folly of

of their Progenitors, tho fatal to them. Men are vain in their Minds, and ſecure in their Sins, by Conformity to the numerous Examples that encompaſs them. Nay, a regenerate Man by converſing with the unregenerate World, is in danger to be tainted in his Judgment, and to be irregular in his Affections to Earthly Things: he is apt to conceive ſo highly, and to frame ſuch glorious and goodly Ideas of Worldly Excellencies, that his Deſires are inflam'd to attain them, and proportionably he is chill'd and controul'd in the Alacrity and Vigor of his Endeavours after heavenly things. Thus as a freſh-Water River by its nearneſs to the Sea has a brackiſh Taſte; ſo even the Citizens of Heaven are prone to be Earthly-minded, by their Society with the Children of this World. 'Tis the wiſe and earneſt Advice of the Apoſtle, *Be not conformed to this*

this World, but be ye transform'd by the renewing of your Minds, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect Will of God. The Corruption of the World has deeply ſeiz'd upon us ſince to purge it away; a Man muſt be melted anew and transform'd into another Creature. So difficult it is for a Carnal Man to reſiſt the united Force and potent Sway of corrupt Nature and Cuſtom.

(2.) By oppoſing thoſe who ſincerely comply with the Heavenly Call, either by Scorn and Deriſion, or Violence and Perſecution. Human Nature is very ſenſible of diſparaging Reflections, and 'tis one of the ſpiteful Arts of Satan to make uſe of his Inſtruments to deride ſerious Religion out of the World. 'Tis equally profane and pernicious to turn into Raillery and wild Mirth the Impieties and Impurities of the Wicked, and the Holineſs

that

that ſhines in the Lives of excellent Saints: for the *making a Mock of Sin*, takes away the juſt Horrour and Deteſtation of it; and the ſcurrilous vilifying of Holineſs, takes away the Veneration and high Reſpect that is due to it. Carnal Men who live in Pleaſures, without reſtraint of their licentious Appetites, upbraided by the holy and heavenly Conſervation of ſincere Chriſtians, cannot with Patience ſuffer others to practiſe what they neglect; and to countenance their own Looſeneſs, and from Revenge, ſcurrilouſly abuſe whom they will not imitate. *Pure and undefiled Religion* is the Game that winged Wits fly at. He that avoids the appearance and approach of Sin, that *ſtrives to be holy as God is holy in all manner of Converſation*, is the Mark wherein their poiſon'd Arrows are faſten'd. *The juſt upright Man is laughed to ſcorn.* Nay, even Job 12. 4.

dull Wretches will ſet up for Wits, and attempt by their inſipid Jeſts, and thredbare Fooleries to abuſe the Saints. But all the bitter Sarcaſms that are darted upon Religion, are infinitely more hurtful to the Deſpiſers than the Deſpiſed. It argues a prodigious Depravation of Mind in thoſe who take a perverſe delight in ſcorning Holineſs, the glorious Likeneſs of God in Man: ſuch in the account of Scripture are the worſt Sinners, the moſt forlorn Wretches, whoſe Condition is dreadful, if not deſperate.

This ſcornful expoſing Religion to make Men aſham'd of it, is moſt ſucceſsful upon the Diſpoſitions of young Perſons, and thoſe who are of higher Birth and Rank in the World. Youth is the bluſhing Age, and has a Tenderneſs of Face, that cannot bear the Prints of Diſgrace. If one in his early Age begins to breath the Life of Holineſs, if

he

he abſtains from fleſhly Luſts that war againſt the Soul, he is repreſented as fondly nice, and ridiculouſly ſcrupulous: no leſs than the ſpecial Grace of of God is neceſſary to fortify his holy Reſolutions, and make him ſuperior to the Scorns of the Wicked.

The Honourable are fearful of Diſgrace, and more tender of their Reputation, than others, being in a greater Light, and expos'd to more Eyes and Obſervations. If one of noble Quality renounces the Vanities and Enticements of the World, *makes the Fear of the Lord his Treaſure*; if he zealouſly endeavours to be more diſtinguiſh'd from others by his eminent Vertues, than by the Splendor of his Condition, he is ſcornfully traduc'd as a melancholy Fop, as a low Spirit: as if Conſtancy in Devotion, and the Practice of Mortification were a deſcent from his Dignity, and caſt a

dark ſad Shade upon his Honour. Thus the vain perverted World vilifies that Holineſs in Men, which
Iſa. 6. the bleſſed Angels adore in God.

But alas, how many that had ſerious Inclinations to be religious, and were entred into the way of Life, have been cool'd and check'd in their firſt Fervors: they could not firmly ſuſtain Reproach, and endure Conflicts with the Paſſion of Shame, therefore return'd to the Courſe of the World, and with it have periſh'd to Eternity. We read
Deut 25. 17, 18, 19. of the *Iſraelites* after their coming out of *Egypt*, they met in the way with *Amalec*, who *feared not God, and ſmote the feeble, and faint, and weary of them*: Therefore the Lord ſtrictly charged them to blot *out the Memory of* Amalec *from under Heaven.* In this Type, profane Scorners, that diſcourage Beginners in Religion, may ſee their Doom.

To

To conclude this firſt General, I ſhall obſerve, the Parable repreſents to us, that thoſe who were firſt invited, *not only made light of it, but entreated ſpitefully the Servants, and ſlew them.* Their neglect of the gracious Invitation, was like the Sleep of one oppreſt with the Fumes of Wine, that does not hear a Meſſage ſent to him: their cruel Rage againſt thoſe who invited them, was like the awaking of a diſtracted Perſon, who hearing the Voice that calls him, and by an Error of Judgment miſtaking what is ſaid, in fury ſnatches his Sword, and deſtroys thoſe about him. Wicked Men are of Satan's Society: he *was a Murderer from the beginning*, and hates the Word of Life. As ſoon as our Saviour was born, and pointed out by a new Star in Heaven, there was a deſign to deſtroy him. 'Tis true, the ſubtile Tempter does not at firſt in- Mat. 22.

ſpire Men with Rage againſt the Goſpel: but as in the Art of dying, ſome Colours are preparatory for others, the Cloth is firſt dipt in Blew before it takes a Black; ſo by ſeveral degrees in ſinning he brings them to extream Wickedneſs. Thus the Neglect of the Goſpel makes way for the Contempt of thoſe who bring it; and Contempt proceeds to Hatred, and Hatred ſometimes produces miſchievous and deadly Effects. Now the fear of Temporal Evils, eſpecially if extream, to which Men are open and obnoxious for the Goſpel, will hinder them from embracing it, or cauſe them to forſake it, if they are not ſupernaturally enlightned and confirm'd, by *the Spirit of Power and Love, and of a ſound Mind.*

2 Tim. 1.

SER-

SERMON VII.

LUKE xiv. 23.

The Lord ſaid to the Servant, Compel them to come in, that my Houſe may be full.

I Proceed to the ſecond Hinderance of Mens rejecting the Call of the Goſpel. *The Fleſh*, that in the Language of the Scripture ſignifies the corrupt Nature, and inbred Inclinations of Men to forbidden things, obſtruct their coming to Chriſt. The corrupt Nature is called *Fleſh*, not only as that is a term of vilifying, for the Original and Reſolution of Fleſh is into the Duſt, but partly with reſpect to its Propagation, and chiefly in that the uſual attractive and de-

filing Objects of Mens Thoughts and Desires are carnal, and are enjoyed by the carnal Faculties. Our Minds and Affections are coloured and qualified, distinguish'd and denominated from the Objects about which they are conversant. This Corruption is spread through all the Faculties of the Soul: the Mind is carnal in its Principles and Acts, *in opposition to the Spirit of the Mind renewed by Grace*: the Will and Affections are depraved. *Whatever is born of the Flesh is Flesh.* The Apostle fully expresses this Corruption: he saith, *the natural Man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*; that implies the stubborn Averseness in the Will and Affections from spiritual things: *for they are Foolishness to him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* The natural Mind is indispos'd and incapable of knowing supernatural things in their

1 Cor. 2. 14.

their Reality and Goodneſs, ſo as to raviſh the Will into a Compliance, till 'tis purified and ſpiritualiz'd by the holy Spirit. The ſame Apoſtle tells us, that *the Carnal Mind is Enmity againſt God, for it is not ſubject to the Law, neither can be.* As the Luſts of the Fleſh are oppoſite to the Law of God, ſo the Wiſdom of the Fleſh is to the Goſpel. Rom. 5.

This corrupt Nature makes the World ſuch a dangerous Snare to Men: for it blinds their Minds ſo as not to ſee the Droſs of Earthly Things, and the Glory of Heavenly. St. *John* expreſſes the tempting Objects of the World by the vicious Affections that are drawn out and faſtn'd upon them. *All that is in the World is the Luſt of the Fleſh, the Luſt of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life*; for the Luſts of Men put a Gloſs upon them, and make them pernicious. The Poiſon is not

not in the Flowers but in the Spider, that turns the Extraction from them into its own Nouriſhment. Accordingly St. *Peter* ſpeaks of the
2 Pet. 1. *Corruption in the World through Luſt.* The vain Heart is more deceitful than the vain World: for not only Reaſon that inſtructs the Wiſe, but Experience that inſtructs Fools, affords ſufficient Conviction, that all things here below *are Vanity and Vexation*: there is none ſo low, none ſo exalted in the World, but finds it ſo. By taſting a ſprig of Wormwood, the Bitterneſs is perceived as truly as by drinking a ſtrong Infuſion of it. The World with all its Varieties is a multiplied and perpetuated Vanity; it affords no ſolid Satisfaction: the ſetting down a thouſand Cyphers makes no Sum. But the carnal Heart is ſo enchanted with the falſe Luſtre and ſeeming Pleaſures of the World, that by changing one Vanity for another,

another, it ſeeks and expects Satiſfaction. This verifies the Obſervation of the wiſe Preacher, *The Heart of the Sons of Men is full of Evil, and Madneſs is in their Hearts while they live, and after that they go down to the Dead.* Eccleſ. 9. 3. What a prodigy of Madneſs is it for Men to catch at a ſhadow of Happineſs, to ſeek for that which they are uncertain to find; and if they do find, they are certain to loſe; and to neglect ſubſtantial Felicity, which if they ſincerely ſeek, they ſhall obtain, and if they obtain, they ſhall enjoy for ever!

But that it may be more evident *that the Fleſh with its Affections and Luſts*, does powerfully interpoſe to hinder Men from embracing the Goſpel, I will particularly conſider its Oppoſition to the ſupernatural Doctrines revealed in the Goſpel, the Objects of Faith; to the holy Precepts of it, the Rule of Obedience; to the ſpiritual Rewards recommend-

commended to our Choice.

1. The great Myſtery of Godlineſs, is the Incarnate Son of God, who by an ignominious and accurſed Death purchaſed a glorious bleſſed Life for his People: this Doctrine is accounted Fooliſhneſs, and rejected by the proud unrenewed Mind. The Goſpel is *ſtiled the Word of Faith*: 'tis conveyed to the Soul with Authority and Efficacy by Faith. As Faith in Chriſt was required of the Sick, and Blind, and Lame, that his healing Vertue might reſt on them; ſo the belief of the Divinity of his Perſon and Doctrine, is the firſt vital Qualification that makes us capable of ſpiritual healing. Infidelity ſtops the Fountain of Grace.

1 Cor. 1.

Rom. 10. 8.

Mat. 9. 28.

The Apoſtle ſaith, the *Word preach'd did not profit them that heard it, not being mixt with Faith.* Now altho the Light of the Goſpel be ſo clear and convincing that the ſincere

ſincere conſidering Mind cannot ſuſpend its Aſſent to it, yet the carnal Mind ſtain'd with Prejudices and vicious Affections, will not admit it. *An evil Heart is the principal cauſe of Unbelief.*

The Jews from Pride, Vain-Glory, and the Love of the World, rejected the Son of God, tho all the Characters of the Meſſias were conſpicuous in him: he did not come with viſible Glory and Obſervation, according to their Expectations and Deſires; they *ſaw no Form nor Comelineſs in him, and did not believe the Report concerning him*; they were ſcandaliz'd at his Parentage and mean Condition: he diſcovered their beloved Sins, and ſharply reproved the reigning Vices among them, which made his Perſon and his Preaching ſo odious to them.

Our Saviour tells us, *that Light was come into the World; and Men love Dark-*

Darkneſs rather than Light, becauſe their Deeds are evil. The Prejudice of their Paſſions was ſo ſtrong, that they rejected the ſaving Truths of the Goſpel, and believed damnable Deluſions.

Now the ſame Roots of Offence are in the Hearts of Men againſt the Goſpel. Such a Cloud ariſes from the Steam of carnal Luſts darkning the Underſtanding, that it cannot diſcover Truths ſo high as the myſterious Doctrines of Chriſt. Love in the Heart is requiſite as well as Light in the Mind, to know ſpiritual things: Obedience to the Will of God is the beſt Preparative to believe his Word. Our Saviour juſtly tax'd the Phariſees, *they did not repent, that they might believe.* Men are averſe from receiving thoſe Doctrines that condemn their Luſts; and are Infidels that they may be freely wicked, that the Shadow of Repentance may not diſturb them.

'Tis

'Tis ſaid of Atheiſtical Scorners, *they are willingly ignorant*: The corrupt Will rules imperiouſly, and turns the Thoughts from thoſe Arguments, which if duly conſidered, Reaſon with a ſtrong hand would conſtrain them to acknowledg there is a righteous God who has Authority to command, and Power to puniſh thoſe who rebel againſt his Laws. 2 Pet. 3. 5.

'Tis true, they pretend to offer ſomething for a more colourable Denial of ſupernatural Revelation: but the perverſneſs of Infidelity appears through all their Pretences. Some object againſt the Sublimity of the Doctrines of the Goſpel. It was the ſcornful Expreſſion of one, This is like the *Peace of God that paſſes all Underſtanding*. As if the Reality of things depended upon the Conception and Capacity of the Human Mind, and Divine Truths were impoſſible becauſe incomprehenſible.

henſible. Such fooliſh Pride obſtructs the Reception of Divine Truths; and from hence humble Chriſtians are deſpiſed as led by a blind Belief. Others are offended at the ſimplicity of the revealing them. The Doctrines are ſo high they cannot reach unto, the manner of conveying them is ſo low they will not ſtoop to. But 'tis evident theſe arguings are not from the Reaſon but the Luſts of Men. For the rare Accord of the Matter and Manner of the Goſpel-Revelation is a ſenſible Character of its Deſcent from God: The Doctrine is high and bright, of an extraordinary Revelation; the Delivery of it is eaſy and familiar, ſince 'tis for the Inſtruction and Salvation of Men; and accordingly the Divine Wiſdom has made an exact Temperament of theſe things. Briefly, the corrupt Affections pervert the Will to reject the Goſpel, and the perverted

perverted Will influences the Underſtanding to diſapprove it. Nay, carnal Luſts force Men againſt their Light, (as the Jews did *Pilate* to condemn the Perſon of Chriſt) to condemn his Doctrine.

There are many in this degenerate Age, who altho they dare not publickly own the defil'd and abhorr'd Name of Infidels, yet among their Companions employ their Wit to diſpute and deride the moſt ſublime and ſacred Truths out of the World. Their Faces are full of Death, the Tokens of Reprobation are viſible upon them. The Iſſue will diſcover them to be the wretched Examples of that fearful Rule. Thoſe who are deſtin'd to final Ruin are infatuated.

Others are Believers in Profeſſion and their own Conceit, but Infidels in Practice. Their Faith is but a vain Opinion, a looſe Aſſent to the Chriſtian Doctrine, becauſe

'tis the Religion of the Country, but with our Radication and Eſtabliſhment. This is evident, conſidering that the Doctrines of the Goſpel are not meerly intellectual, the Objects of Theory and Speculation, but moral and practical, the Objects of our choice and ſeeking: *This is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Jeſus Chriſt is come into the World to ſave Sinners.* Accordingly the unfeigned belief of them is ſeated not only in the Mind, but in the Heart, and is correſpondent to the infallible Truth and tranſcendent Goodneſs of the thing revealed: they make ſuch an Impreſſion on the Soul, that the value of them is above Life, and whatever comes in Competition is with deſpiſing Diſdain rejected. But when Men ſeldom remember and little regard eternal Things, how ſpecious ſoever the Profeſſion is, can there be a reaſonable Belief

of

of their Words againſt their Works? Therefore in the Language of the Scripture, *all that do not firſt ſeek the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Righteouſneſs thereof*, are Unbelievers; it being morally impoſſible that Men ſhould ſincerely believe, and have a due Apprehenſion of it, but it muſt be the great Deſign of their Souls, and the main Buſineſs of their Lives to obtain it.

2. Security is the conſtant Effect of Infidelity, and hardens Men in their Sins, and the neglect of Salvation ſo dearly purchas'd, and graciouſly offered to them in the Goſpel. Direct Infidels ſet *their Mouth againſt Heaven*, and defy the Furnace of Hell. They are blindly bold, and fearleſs of that Judgment that makes the Devils tremble. Others, tho not open and palpable Infidels, are in a dead Calm, not ſenſible of their Sins, and have ſlight Apprehenſions of their great

Danger: Infidelity lies at the bottom of their Security. As the *Egyptians* in the thick Darkneſs that covered the Land, *moved not from their Places*; ſo many in ignorant Darkneſs, ſit down and are at reſt, careleſs of the Saviour that *can deliver from the Wrath to come.* Only thoſe who have ſtrong Apprehenſions of Evils imminent and deſtructive, will fly to Chriſt as a Sanctuary and Shelter, and ſubmit to his Terms of ſaving them.

Secondly; The Corrupt Nature will not ſubmit to the Sanctity and Purity of the Goſpel. The forecited Scripture tells us, the *Carnal Mind is Enmity againſt God*: and that Enmity is arm'd with many ſtrong Luſts oppoſing his Law. The principal Cauſe of rejecting the Goſpel is common to all, *We will not have this Man to reign over us.* 'Tis obſervable;

Luke 19. 14.

ſervable, that as Holineſs is that Attribute wherein God doth moſt excel, and Men are moſt defective; ſo the corrupt Will is moſt oppoſite to it. The Juſtice and Power of God in ſome caſes Men do approve and apply themſelves to: if injuriouſly accuſed or oppreſt, they deſire his Juſtice to vindicate their Innocence, and revenge their Wrongs: if in Diſtreſs and Exigencies, they pray that his powerful Providence may regard and relieve them: but they are extreamly averſe from his Holineſs ſhining in his Laws, which excites his Juſtice and Power to puniſh thoſe who rebel againſt it. They are ready to ſay to Chriſt, what the rebellious *Iſraelites* ſaid to *Reboboham*, *Thy Father made our Yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous Service of thy Father, and his heavy Yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will ſerve thee.* They will

1 Kings 12. 4.

meaſure out the ſcantling of their Obedience, how far he ſhall rule, and farther they will not yield. But our Saviour declares, *I am not*
Mat. 5. *come to deſtroy the Law, but to fulfil it.* 'Tis true, the Goſpel is a Covenant of Grace, a ſoveraign Compoſition of precious Promiſes of recovering Grace, and pardoning Mercy; but 'tis alſo a Law, and *enjoins Repentance towards God, and Faith in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* As without Compenſation to the Juſtice, ſo without Conformity to the Holineſs of God, we can never be reſtored to his Favour, and enjoy him as our Felicity.

Our Saviour preſcribes this indiſpenſable Rule to his Diſciples, *If any Man will come after me, let him deny himſelf, and take up his Croſs and follow me.* This is a comprehenſive Fundamental Duty, and the natural Man has a ſtrong Reluctancy to every part of it.

1. Self-

1. Self-dependance upon our own Vertues and Duties for the obtaining the Favour of God, and the Eternal Reward, is very natural to Men: it was the Condition of the firſt Covenant, to which they cleave. Men of a fair Converſation, and unblemiſh'd in the Eyes of the World, have ſome Sparks of the Phariſee in them, *who juſtified himſelf, that he was no Extortioner, nor Unjuſt, nor an Adulterer, nor as the profane Publican; and that he faſted and paid Tithes.* Upon ſuch Reaſons many preſume of the Goodneſs and Safety of their Spiritual State: they take Pride and Content in themſelves, in their Moral Goodneſs, and do not feel the want of a Saviour, nor apply themſelves with humble mournful Affections to him for Reconciliation to God. Others think by the Worthineſs of their Works to compenſate for the Unworthineſs of their Sins, to com-

mute one Duty for another, and ballance their Accounts with Heaven, not conſidering that if their Works were perfectly good, they are but the Performance of their Duty, if they had never ſinn'd. It was one great Obſtruction that hinder'd the Jews from receiving
Rom. 10. 3. the Goſpel: *They being ignorant of God's Righteouſneſs, and going about to eſtabliſh their own Righteouſneſs, did not ſubmit themſelves to the Righteouſneſs of God.* One of a high Spirit will rather wear a mean Garment of his own, than a rich Livery, the Mark of Servile Dependance. Pride reſiſts Grace, and Grace reſiſts Pride. The Law of Faith requires us to renounce not only our Unrighteouſneſs, but our Righteouſneſs, even the moſt excellent Graces and the Fruits of them, in compariſon of Chriſt, and as a Foundation of obtaining the Pardon of Sin, and Salvation for ever. Our

Righte-

Righteouſneſs is defective and defiled, and cannot endure the trial of God's inlightning Tribunal. All our Doings and Sufferings cannot expiate the leaſt Sin; we muſt only rely upon the Lord our Righteouſneſs, to reconcile us to God, and that we may ſtand in Judgment. *He was made Sin for us, who knew no Sin, that we might be made the Righteouſneſs of God in him*, not in our ſelves. 2 Cor. 5. 21.

How hard it is to awaken Men out of the Phariſaical Dream of their own Righteouſneſs, is evident both in the Doctrine and Practice of thoſe of the Roman Communion. They aſſert the formal Cauſe of our Juſtification in the ſight of God is our inherent Holineſs: they blaſpheme the imputed Righteouſneſs of Chriſt as a fantaſtick Apprehenſion: they declare that good Works have the merit of Con and Condignity to eternal Luke 16.

nal Life: and that by Penance, Satisfaction is paid to God for their Sins, as if there were a Proportion between the one and the other. They ſucceed the Phariſees in their proud and ſtubborn Reſiſtance of the Goſpel. And among other carnal Motives that faſten Men in that corrupt Religion, theſe have a ſpecial force, as quieting Conſcience, and gratifying their Luſts, that they can make Compenſation for their Offences againſt God, and that the Abſolution of a Prieſt ſeals their Pardon: thus being clear, they may begin a new Score, and return to their old Luſts with new Affections.

2. As Self implies the Fleſh with its Affections and Luſts, ſo Self-denial and Sin-denial are of the ſame extent. The whole Body of Corruption with all the parts of it, even the deareſt, the moſt tender and moſt cheriſh'd by carnal Men, muſt

muſt be mortified. Severe Reſtraints are laid upon the deſiring and the angry Appetites, the Springs of all the Sins and Miſeries in the World. We are ſtrictly commanded to pluck *out the right Eye,* Mat. 5. *and to cut off the right Hand,* upon the moſt fearful Penalties, the Mark 9. ſuffering Torments inſupportable and everlaſting. The Goſpel has the Perfections of a Rule, 'tis clear and compleat in the Direction of our Duty. *It teaches us to deny all* Tit. 2. *Ungodlineſs, and Worldly Luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this World.* Now carnal Men are apt to ſay with the *Capernaites, This is an hard ſaying.* Every one John 6. has a peculiar Favourite Luſt, the 64. Sin of his Complexion, or of the Country wherein he lives, which if you pluck out of their Boſoms, they will fly in your Face. Men willingly enough hear Reproofs againſt Sins to which they are diſinclin'd;

inclin'd; but if directed againſt their own Sins, whether of Pleaſure or Profit, they will ſcorn the Reproof, and ſtorm at the Reprover. They will perform ſome Duties that are conſiſtent with their Carnal Eaſe and Intereſt, but obſtinately ſtick at others. *Herod* is a notorious Inſtance of this: 'tis related *he heard* John *Baptiſt gladly, and obſerved him; and when he heard him, he did many things*: but his inceſtuous Affection made him prefer a filthy Harlot before the pure Law of God.

Mark 6. 20.

One indulged Luſt captivates the Soul, and keeps it under the Power of Satan. If one Leg of a Bird be catch'd in the Net, 'tis as ſurely held as if its whole Body were entangled. One Luſt ſeparates from Chriſt, and is a Bar againſt our entrance into Heaven, for Chriſt is the only way to it. The Word of God is *ſharper than a two-edg'd*

edg'd Sword; but carnal Men will interpoſe their Souls between their tender Luſts and the Word, and receive its deadly Strokes to ſpare them. The Lord Chriſt tells the Jews, *Ye will not come to me that ye may have Life*: They would readily embrace a Saviour that would allow the Pleaſures of Sin, and free them from the Puniſhment; but their Wills were ſo ſtrongly engaged, they would ſuffer no Divorce from their beloved Luſts: they choſe Hell with Sin, rather than Heaven with Holineſs. John 5.

3. The denial of Self includes all that in the order of Nature belongs to us: Life, and all the Supports, the Comforts, the Ornaments and Endearments of it; the ſweeteſt Relations, Father and Mother, Brother and Siſter, Wife and Children, the richeſt Poſſeſſions, Houſes and Land, muſt be always parted with, in the Preparations of our

Heart,

Heart, and Reſolutions of our Wills, and actually, rather than deſert our Duty. Such a Supremacy of Affection is required by our Saviour, that ſuſpends the Operation of our Love upon all inferior things, when they are in Competition with his Intereſt and Glory. This Command binds all without exemption: therefore he directs his Followers to be arm'd with Expectation of hard Entertainment in the World. Now this Precept ſeems ſo ſevere to carnal Men, that no Motives can reconcile their Affections to it. If they are ſpoiled of the Advantages, and deprived of the Pleaſures of this World, they are ready to complain as *Micah* to them who robb'd him of his Image and *Teraphim*, *You take away my Gods.* As if the Son of God were ſuch a poor or illiberal Rewarder, either defective in Power or Love, that they ſhould be Loſers for his ſake.

Thirdly;

Thirdly; The promiſed Rewards of the Goſpel have no affective Force upon the Carnal Mind, and Affections. 'Tis true, the Goſpel has open'd Heaven, and *brought Life and Immortality to light*; a State of entire endleſs Joy in the Preſence of God. Is it poſſible that Men ſhould be indifferent and careleſs of their final Happineſs? 'Tis almoſt equally difficult to induce Men to believe and chuſe the Favour and Fruition of God as their only Felicity, as to convince them they do not believe and chooſe it. But their Actions declare their Choice, and their Choice declares their Eſteem: for if his Favour were eſteem'd an unvaluable Treaſure, it would be the chief Object of their Deſires; they would not forfeit it for all the World: 'tis therefore evident that the chuſing the Pleaſures of Sin, and the Profits of the World, is the direct deſpiſing the Favour of God. And the account

account of it is clear: for tho Heaven be a State of eternal and inexpreſſible Bleſſedneſs, yet 'tis future and ſpiritual: it makes but a weak Impreſſion upon their Minds, and is unſutable to their Affections. Can carnal Men have but an imaginary Repreſentation of the World to come, and their Aſſent to it is overſhadowed and eclips'd by the preſent World with its Advantages and Pleaſures; they cannot reliſh a Happineſs purely ſpiritual. 'Tis not the Goodneſs of the Object, but the Inclination of the Heart that makes it deſirable. The wiſe Philoſopher obſerves, "That ſuch "as the radicated Diſpoſition and "Habit of a Man is, ſuch will the "End appear of him. Therefore a ſupernatural ſpiritual Good cannot appear to a ſenſual Man ſo attractive, as to be choſen as his Felicity. Only *the pure in Heart can ſee God*, and love him, and enjoy him

him in his amiable Excellencies: the Unrenewed have no certain nor ſatisfying Notions of the Happineſs that his Preſence diffuſes among the Bleſſed above. This will be diſcourſed of more particularly under another Head.

Fourthly; Satan has a great Agency in Mens Oppoſition to the Goſpel, and their neglect of Salvation. His Title, the Tempter, implies his conſtant Practice. 'Tis true, he cannot hurt us againſt our Wills; the Enemy without could not ſurprize us, if the Traitor within, the corrupt Nature, did not give him Admittance; he cannot immediately work upon the Will, nor diſcern the Mind: without our Conſent he cannot obtain a Conqueſt over us; therefore his prevailing Temptations do not diſculpate Sinners that yield to them: he rules only in the Children of

Diſobedience, they are his voluntary Slaves; but he has a ſtrange Power in the Minds and Hearts of Men by his managing tempting Objects. The World makes an Impreſſion upon our lower Faculties, and he improves the Impreſſion, and excites corrupt Deſires. As the Operations of the holy Spirit in Believers are ſecret but ſtronger than the Influence of the Stars: ſo the Workings of Satan are in the Wicked ſecret but powerful. I will firſt conſider the Motives that urge him to be ſo active and ardent in hindering the Succeſs of the Goſpel for the Salvation of our Souls. 2. His Methods and Wiles for that end. The Motives are,

1. His eternal Enmity to God: for being under a Doom never to be reverſt, his Malice is always raging and working to diſhonour and diſpleaſe the Righteous Judg.

He

He *ſinn'd from the beginning*, 'tis his unwearied and uninterrupted Work. Men in complying with his Temptations, are ſway'd and carried by the Biaſs of their Luſts; ſome are brib'd by Profit, others allured by Pleaſure: but his great End is, that the Law of God may be violated, his Majeſty deſpiſed, and his Glory obſcur'd. As in a rebellious Inſurrection, the Multitude are engaged, ſome for Spoil, others for private Reſpects, but the Deſign of the Leader is to dethrone the King, and uſurp his Scepter. Satan's Oppoſition againſt God is more fierce and ſtedfaſt than of the moſt reſolved Rebels that trample upon the Divine Law every day: they do more accompliſh his Will than their own, which will be the occaſion and matter of his inſulting Scorn, and furiouſly upbraiding them hereafter. Briefly, he loves Sin for Sin's ſake, as 'tis an Affront

and Provocation of the Divine Majeſty, and is more pleaſed in the Sins of Men than in their everlaſting Damnation, becauſe the holy and righteous Lawgiver is diſhonoured by their Sins, and glorified in their Puniſhment.

2. His old Enmity and Hatred againſt the Souls of Men. 'Tis another Hell to him, to ſee them reſtor'd to the Favour of God, and his glorious Image re-ingraven on them. He is a jealous Jailor, and if poſſible will not loſe any of his Captives. Being condemn'd to everlaſting Burnings, he will make them feel his Fire.

The Scripture repreſents him as a ſtrong and ſubtile Adverſary: *a roaring Lion that goes about ſeeking whom he may devour, and the old Serpent.* His Enmity is univerſal, his Diligence is equal to his Malice, and his Malice whets his Invention to lay ſuch Trains as may be deſtructive

ſtructive to them. His Strength does chiefly lie in his Subtilty. If Men could ſee him in his Native Shape of Darkneſs, an infernal Fiend, the moſt curſed Creature, or what he is relatively to them, *a Liar and a Murderer from the beginning*, how would they flee with Horror from his Temptations? But he does not awake Sinners, and then wound them; he is not ſeen till felt, nor diſcover'd till he has faſten'd his Stings in their Souls. He ſpreads his Snares in the Dark; and when their Spiritual Senſes are lock'd in a Midnight Sleep, he deſtroys them.

Secondly; His Methods and Wiles for this end are various.

1. He blinds the Minds of Men, and hardens them in Unbelief. This was his firſt and ſucceſsful Temptation, and is the Pattern that he ſtill follows. He told the Woman

ſhe ſhould not die; and the Reſtraint of Fear being taken away, the Pleaſure of Taſte and Curioſity ſoon prevail'd with her to eat the forbidden Fruit. The Apoſtle gives this account of Mens rejecting the Truths of the Goſpel: *If our Goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that are loſt: In whom the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them who believe not, leſt the Light of the glorious Goſpel of Chriſt, who is the Image of God, ſhould ſhine unto them.* His principal Deſign is to encreaſe the natural Infidelity in the Minds of Men, who are ſo govern'd by Senſe, that in Matters of Faith they require the Evidence of Senſe: for he knows the powerful Efficacy of the Divine Doctrine where 'tis believed. Faith enters into the Conſcience, opens the Heart, commands and captivates the Will and Affections, and brings the moſt ſtubborn Sinners from the Kingdom of Satan into

into the Kingdom of Chriſt. *He is in them*, poſſeſſes all their Faculties, and by that advantage works effectually. He has the Monarchy of their Minds, and diverts their Thoughts from pondering the Arguments that would turn their Judgments, and induce the Belief of the Goſpel: he excites thoſe carnal Affections that blind the Mind: he inchants Men with enticing ſenſual Objects, that they neither can nor will believe what is contrary to their Luſts. Reaſon, Conſcience, Faith, whereby Men are primarily and chiefly diſtinguiſh'd from the Brutes, are ſacrificed to the Prince of Darkneſs. Then they are ſecurely his own: for the moſt precious Promiſes have no attractive Influence upon thoſe in whom there is reigning Infidelity: the ſharpeſt Threatnings cannot pierce through the Armour of Obſtinacy.

2. The moſt that refuſe the Offer of Grace in the Goſpel, are not abſolute Infidels; therefore the Tempter tries other ways to ruine them. He obſerves the Diſpoſitions and Circumſtances of Men, and preſents ſuch Temptations whereby they are moſt likely to be taken and held in his Snares. Altho Human Nature be wholly depraved, yet all Men are not caſt into the ſame Mould: they are diſtinguiſh'd by their various Aſpects, Conſtitutions, Deſires, and Conditions of Life, and are not wrought on by the ſame Motives. The Tempter by his natural Sagacity and Experience (he is ſtiled the *old Serpent*) has exact Knowledg in the Art of diſcerning Men. Sometimes ſudden Paſſions are painted in the Countenance, and he takes particular Advantage to ſtrike in with them. But his univerſal Method

is

is to preſent the fitteſt Baits to the natural Inclinations, and habitual Diſpoſitions of Men: he knows the Faction within will readily open to his Call. The Sanguine are ſoft and diſſolute, and are eaſily drawn to exorbitant Pleaſures: The Melancholy are inclin'd to Diſcontent, Sorrow, Impatience, Deſpair: Thoſe who have active reſtleſs Spirits, are taken with the Advantages of the World. The muddy Mind is eaſily ſtirr'd by the Offer of Gain: the voluptuous Mind is ſtrongly allur'd by ſenſual Delights: the aſpiring Mind is incens'd by the proſpect of Honour. Now tho the Tempter be a Spirit, and not capable of thoſe Sins which are acted by the ſenſible Faculties, yet not only ſpiritual Sins, Pride, Envy, Malignity, and the like, but Fleſhly Luſts, even the foulleſt Actions are from his Incitations. He was not only a proud

proud Spirit, but an unclean Spirit
2 Chron. in *David*. He was a covetous Spirit in *Judas*: an hypocritical Spirit in *Ananias*: Satan put it *into his Heart to detain part of the Price, and lie to the Holy Ghoſt*. He preſents the Temptation, and ſuggeſts Motives to embrace it. He brings the Fewel, enticing Objects, and inſpires the Flame, ardent Deſires to them. If burning Luſts begin to cool, and raging Corruptions are controul'd by the threatning of the Word, and the Terrors of Conſcience, he will blow them up again. Now any reigning Luſt is a Viceroy of Satan's, and keeps Poſſeſſion for him, and conſequently excludes the Son of God from Admiſſion into the Heart.

3. He perſwades Men that Religion in its Power and Strictneſs is not neceſſary: the abſtaining from enormous Crimes, and the performance of ſome outward Service will

will be available for Salvation. Hell is the Portion of the Devil and his Children, and none are of his Race but incarnate Devils, unclean Spirits in brutiſh Bodies. He makes uſe of carnal Men, under the pretence of Friendſhip to perſwade thoſe who make a Shew of Conſcience, to be leſs tender and vigilant, by telling them, this Strictneſs is ſuperfluous, 'twill ſpoil you, make you unſociable and odious: the Wiſe and Learned that think to go to Heaven with the firſt, take a greater liberty: they will ſay Moderation is a Vertue, and by the pretence of Temper cheriſh the loathſom Diſtemper of Lukewarmneſs, that is as fatal as a deadly Coldneſs. The Tempter will permit Men to make uſe of Religion as a Medicine, a little in fainting Fits, to relieve and recover them, but not as our daily Food: not to be their diligent and conſtant

ſtant Practice. The crafty Serpent will abuſe the Words of the holy Spirit, *Be not righteous overmuch.* As *Judas* ſaid of the precious Ointment poured upon our Saviour, *Why was this waſte?* ſo carnal Men are apt to ſay, Why theſe ſevere Reſtraints from ſatisfying the natural Appetites? Why ſuch Circumſpection in our walking? Why keep the Lord's-day ſo religiouſly? Is it not enough to hear the Sermons? May we not afterwards unbend, and enjoy free Society, and recreate our ſelves with carnal Contentments? They do not believe that God is ſo ſtrict in his Commands, nor will be ſo exact in requiring an account for them: fond Creatures to entertain ſuch carnal Conceits of God, to think him like themſelves. They are apt to ſay, the Miniſters will fetter them all by imaginative Rules of Holineſs unpreſcribed in the Scriptures.

tures. For Men would fain have the Light, and the Law that regulates them, to be ſutable to their Appetites and Actions. But are we not commanded to imitate and honour our Pattern, *to be holy as our Heavenly Father is holy, in all manner of Converſation?* Are we not enjoined to *work out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling; to cleanſe our ſelves from all Pollutions of Fleſh and Spirit, and to perfect Holineſs in the Fear of God: to follow Holineſs with the moſt zealous and unſatisfied Deſires*, that, if it were poſſible, we might anticipate Heaven on Earth? Can there be any Excuſe for neglecting theſe holy Duties?

There are none more dangerouſly deceived than thoſe that think they are holy enough, and make no queſtion of the Favour of God and their final Happineſs. They condemn profane outragious Sinners; thoſe who viſibly come ſhort of them,

them, they think will fall ſhort of Salvation; but to excel them, they think is a needleſs Preciſeneſs, a Pride of Singularity, a Maſk of Hypocriſy. 'Tis one of Satan's Arts to conceal the Good that is in the Saints, that they may condemn themſelves, and to conceal the Evil that is in the Unregenerate, that they may flatter themſelves. How many fall as deep as Hell from ſuch high Hopes? for he that does not ſeriouſly deſire and endeavour to be renewed into the unſpotted Image of God, was never truly renewed.

SERMON VIII.

LUKE xiv. 23.

The Lord ſaid to the Servant, Compel them to come in, that my Houſe may be full.

3*dly.* IF Conſcience be not ſeared and ſenſeleſs, but awakens Sinners to reflect upon their Condition, and to ſeek for the pardoning Mercy of God, he deceives them with falſe Notions of Faith and Repentance, and hinders their entire Compliance with the Terms of Mercy offered in the Goſpel. Final Unbelief and Impenitence utterly exclude Men from Salvation: for the Death of Chriſt was not appointed to be a Sacrifice for thoſe Sins. There is no Salvation to be obtain'd without

out the Remiſſion of Sin, no Remiſſion without the Blood of Chriſt, no Application of that precious Blood without Faith. This is the vital Qualification required in all juſtified Perſons: for it has a peculiar Efficiency in receiving Chriſt and Pardon, and aſcribes the Glory of it intirely to the Mercy of God and Merits of Chriſt. 'Tis ſaid,

John 1. 12. *To as many as received him, he gave Power to become the Sons of God, to thoſe who believed on his Name.* Receiving is relative to God's Offer of Chriſt to the Condemned and Miſerable, and implies the taking him in all the Eſſentials of his Office; as a Prophet, to inſtruct us in our Duty and Happineſs by his Word and Spirit; as a Prieſt, to atone the Divine Diſpleaſure by his Propitiation and Interceſſion; as a King, to govern us by his Law, and to beſtow ſpiritual and eternal Bleſſings on us. Faith receives whole

whole Christ as a Kingly Priest, and a saving Prince; he is stiled a *Priest upon a Throne, a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance and Remission of Sins.* He purchas'd the Forgiveness of Sins as a Priest by his Sufferings on the Cross, and pardons as a King upon the Throne: from hence it necessarily follows, that Faith receives Pardon from him in that Relation wherein he procur'd it, and confers it. The Apostle declares, *He died for our Sins, and rose again for our Justification,* and thereby redeem'd us, and acquir'd a Dominion over us: then 'tis clear and consequent, that saving Faith receives him for all those Uses for which God did appoint him; and accordingly *purifies the Heart, overcomes the World, works by Love:* and Love is the Spring and Substance of every Duty, the *fulfilling of the Law.* Now Carnal Men are deceived in this Imagination, that

the ſingle Act of reſting upon Chriſt is ſufficient to entitle them to the Promiſe of Salvation to all that believe in him: they deſire an Intereſt in Chriſt, to quiet their Conſciences; and the World, to ſatisfy their Affections. They will reſt on him as a Redeemer, but reject him as a Lord: they would enjoy his Salvation, but will not endure his Dominion: they will come to partake of the Feſtival-Entertainment, the Pardon of their Sins, but not for the Honour of the Bridegroom. As if the Goſpel were a free Charter to Sin, and gave an impure Indulgence to the vicious Affections; which is as inconſiſtent with it, as the Darkneſs of the Night with Noonday in the ſame Hemiſphere: for then it would foil it ſelf, and fruſtrate its own End. Our Saviour firſt redeems from Sin, *from the vain Converſation*, then from Hell.

1 Pet. 1. 18.

There

There can be no regular ſaving Truſt on his Death, without an unfeigned Reſolution to live within the Compaſs of his Laws. *He is the Author of Eternal Salvation to all that obey him.* 'Tis a blaſphemous Conceit, that he will ſave Men with their Sins. If they will die in ſuch a pleaſing Dream, who can prevent it?

2. Men are miſerably deceived about Repentance. This is indiſpenſably required not only by the Command, but as a Diſpoſition that qualifies the Sinner for pardoning Mercy. For altho the Majeſty and Supremacy of God be illuſtriouſly viſible in pardoning Sinners, and 'tis moſt evident that his Authority is above the Rigor of the Law, and his Mercy is infinitely free; yet they are always exercis'd correſpondently to his eſſential and unchangeable Perfections, his ruling Wiſdom, his

unſpotted Holineſs, and governing Juſtice: From hence it follows that a Sinner remaining in the Love, and under the Power of his Sins, is not a capable Object of pardoning Mercy. Who can conceive that a wiſe Prince ſhould ſend forth a Proclamation of Pardon to Rebels, without their Conſent to return to their Allegiance? *John* the Baptiſt, the Forerunner of the Riſing Sun of Righteouſneſs, the Morning-Star of the Goſpel, preach'd the *Baptiſm of Repentance for the Remiſſion of Sins.* Even our Saviour begins his preaching the Goſpel with this, *Repent ye, and believe the Goſpel.* St. *Peter* directed thoſe who were anxious and inquiring about their Salvation, *Repent, and be baptized in the Name of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, for the Remiſſion of Sins.* He repeats this Doctrine in *Acts* 3.19. *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out, when the Times of refreſh-*

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ing ſhall come from the Preſence of the Lord. And he gives Teſtimony of the Reſurrection of Chriſt, *Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance to* Iſrael, *and Forgiveneſs of Sins.* According to this unalterable Tenor of the Goſpel, Repentance is the Condition that qualifies the Subject, without which no Man is pardoned. Some are ſtrangely ſcrupulous of uſing this word *Condition*, tho 'tis authorized by the full Current of the Reformed Divines, and I know none more convenient to expreſs the neceſſity of it in a pardon'd Perſon. Our Saviour tells his Diſciples, *Ye are my Friends, if ye do whatſoever I command you*: Are not thoſe words a Conditional Aſſertion, upon what Terms they poſſeſs that ineſtimable Privilege of being his Friends? Thus when God invites Men to come out from the Pollutions of the World, and to

touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you, and I will be your Father, and you ſhall be my Sons and Daughters, ſaith the Lord Almighty: Are not theſe Conditional Promiſes? And upon the Performance of the Terms, the Bleſſing will be beſtowed, and not otherwiſe.

'Tis objected, that the aſſerting Repentance to be the Condition of Pardon, leſſens the Grace of the Goſpel: but this is a great Miſtake, for Repentance is an Evangelical Duty and Grace. The Law requires Innocence and perfect Obedience, or condemns without Mercy: the Goſpel commands and accepts Repentance. This Grace was purchas'd by our Saviour, and is wrought in us by the holy Spirit; and join'd with Faith, are the firſt Fruits of the returning Sinner to God. When 'tis exercis'd in the moſt eminent degrees, it has not the leaſt Merit nor Cauſality in the obtaining Pardon. If a repenting

Sinner

Sinner could fill the Air with his Sighs, and Heaven with his Tears; if all his vital Springs were open'd, and Streams of Blood flow'd out, they cannot be ſatisfactory to God's injured Juſtice. The unreconcilable Hatred of Sin, the ardent Love of Holineſs, and ſtedfaſt Reſolution to follow it, which are Ingredients in ſincere Repentance, tho they are pleaſing to God, yet are the Duty of the reaſonable Creature before the commiſſion of Sin, and therefore can deſerve nothing of God. But the ordaining an inſeparable Connexion between Repentance and Pardon, is honourable to God, and very beneficial to Men: for there is no State of Miſery more miſerable than for the Sinner to be hardned in his Sins. But to return from this Digreſſion.

The Scripture deſcribes Repentance by a ſincere Change and Re-

novation of the Mind, the leading Faculty; by the entire turning of the Heart from the love of Sin to the love of Holineſs; by the active lively Paſſions, Sorrow, Fear, Shame, Indignation, Zeal, that are principal Ingredients in it; and by the Fruits *worthy of Repentance, and Works meet for Repentance.* 'Tis called *Repentance from dead Works*, and *Repentance unto Life.* Now Men are willingly deceived with an inſincere and ineffective Repentance: either with a meer mental Change, or with broken Reſolutions inſtead of the intire Heart; or with the leaving ſome Sins, and retaining others that are ſuitable to their Humours and Luſts. They confeſs their Sins, and condemn themſelves for them: ſometimes they have flaſhing Thoughts, melting Affections, good Purpoſes to forſake Sin, this they think to be ſincere Repentance: but when a Temptation

appears,

appears, they are eaſily overcome, and live in the habitual Practice of their provoking Sins. This Conceit of their being true Penitents, is as unreaſonable, as if one that has a returning Ague, ſhould think himſelf freed from his Diſeaſe in the intervals of his Fits. Now to quiet Conſcience, they readily apply to themſelves the words of the Apoſtle, *What I do, I allow not.* And ſince the beſt Saints, while they are in ſympathy with frail Fleſh cannot be perfect, but many Sins they unwarily and unwillingly commit, which are Infirmities lamented by them, and graciouſly forgiven by their Heavenly Father; therefore indulgent Sinners take ſhelter under this Pretence, that their Relapſes are meer unavoidable Infirmities. But what Weakneſs can be pretended for wilful habitual Sins? Such Excuſes do not cover their Guilt, but diſcover

diſcover their ſtrong Affections to their Luſts: They have not the Excuſe of Ignorance: to pretend the Fleſh and the World are omnipotent Enemies that cannot be reſiſted, is to blaſpheme the Grace of the holy Spirit. In ſhort, a new Life is inſeparable from Repentance in its Reality. Sad and ſerious Thoughts, Sighs and Tears, the ſorrowful Confeſſion of Sins, and good Purpoſes againſt them, are the Bloſſoms of Repentance, ineffective without the ſubſtantial Fruits of it in a reformed Converſation. 'Tis one of the Arts of Satan to join things together that are inconſiſtent: In Paradiſe he aſſured the Woman that ſhe might take of the forbidden Tree, and of the Tree of Life: and he now deceives many with the hope that their indulged repeated Sins are conſiſtent with Repentance. But if Men do not forſake the foul

Sins

Sins they lament, their Sorrow will go with them to Hell, and ſettle in the Worm *that ſhall never die.*

Fifthly; The Tempter hinders Men from Compliance with the preſent Invitations of Grace, by ſuggeſting there will be time enough for accepting them hereafter, and a future Repentance will be ſufficient to redreſs all their Miſcarriages. By this Deceit he trains them on to Ruin. By this he eludes the Force of preſent Convictions: that without Repentance they muſt periſh for ever, and puts Men out of the Compaſs of Converſion. 'Tis clear by its own Light, and needs no other Proof, that preſent Obedience is due to the Commands of God; *To day if you will hear his Voice, harden not your Hearts*: Yet againſt all the Evidence of the Word without, and of Conſcience within

within, Satan ſo ſtrongly deceives Men, that they rebelliouſly neglect their Duty, till their Time and Life are expiring. But how unbecoming, how difficult, how hazardous is a late Repentance? How unbecoming is it to put off God till hereafter? Such is his glorious Majeſty, we ſhould with the moſt reverent Reſpect, and humble Thankfulneſs obey his firſt Call. If a Prince ſhould invite a Subject to come to him for ſome great Favour, would he ſo break all the Rules of *Decorum*, as to delay his coming, by ſaying, Hereafter will be time enough? And what is the greateſt Majeſty on Earth to the God of Glory? no more than a Mote to the Sun: and proportionably the Indignity ariſes to neglect the Offers of his Grace.

Beſides, how incongruous is it to give the Flower of our Time and Strength to our Luſts, and to reſerve the

the Bran for God? To spend the Age of our vital and vigorous Actions in the Vanities and Business of the World, and to allow only our languishing Age for the obtaining of Heaven? That Men should content themselves with dead Affections in his Service who is their Life, that were so lively in the Service of Sin that is their Death?

How difficult is a late Repentance? Can you repent and believe at your pleasure? Men think that in their Age, after the ebbing and retirement of the carnal Affections, they shall more easily forsake their Sins: but 'tis a pernicious Deceit. The native Corruption of Mens Hearts, alienates them from a dutiful return to God; and contracted Corruption by habitual Practice, fastens them in Sin as their Centre. In Youth, when the Blood and Spirits are high and fierce, the Body has a corrupting Influence upon the Mind;

Mind; but by Cuſtom in Sin, the Mind is ſo depraved, that it heats the frozen Blood and corrupts the Body. Suppoſe the exciting Grace of the Spirit be not totally withdrawn, which has often been ineffectual; Can it be expected that after Men have been hardened in the commiſſion and continuance of Sin, they ſhould be more receptive of Heavenly Impreſſions? A Diſeaſe neglected at firſt, that ſtealingly ſlips into the Habit of the Body, and gradually weakens Nature, becomes at laſt uncontroulable and incurable.

How hazardous is it to neglect preſent Obedience to the Call of Divine Mercy? Our Days, in the Language of the Pſalmiſt, *are but as an hand-breadth*; and can Men extend their Lives beyond their Span? A vaſt Eternity follows without Dimenſions, an undivided Duration. It is no more in their Power to continue Time to come, than to recal

recal Time paſt. How many are ſurpriz'd by haſty Death in their Security, and die in their unrepented Sins, and periſh for ever? The wiſe Man alarms the Sluggard with approaching Poverty, and his Expreſſions are very applicable to the Delayers of Repentance: Death comes like a Traveller, gradually by ſilent Steps; and as an armed Man, will irreſiſtably arreſt them: and Damnation follows, which they can neither repel nor diſcover till they are ſeiz'd by it. O that deluded Sinners would conſider, that nothing ſo ripens them for Death, and accelerates Judgment, as the Preſumption that the Seaſon of Grace will continue notwithſtanding their laviſh and careleſs waſting it!

But ſuppoſe that Life be extended to the utmoſt Date, can you expect that the holy Spirit ſhould viſit you that have been ſo long putrifying in the Grave, and breath

a new Life into you? 'Tis the most severe threatning, *My Spirit shall not always strive with Man*; and then their Case is desperate. There is a fearful Example recorded in Scripture; the old World was first drowned in Sensuality, and resisted the holy Spirit till he was withdrawn; and then the Deluge wash'd away those Swine in their Mire. Can you expect that at last when the World and your Sins leave you, God will accept and receive you? You are commanded to seek him in your early Spring, in the first Dawnings of his Light and Favour, and is a poor Remnant of your Life sufficient for obtaining his Mercy? The Harlots respected not the dead, but contended for the living Child: Satan and the World strive to have the prime and best part of your Lives, and will God be contented with the dying Remains? Or, do you expect an easy Composition

for

for all the Abuſe of his Benefits, becauſe of his Patience? Do you preſume becauſe he forbears ſo long, he will readily forgive at laſt? The Servant not call'd to an account till he was run into an irrecoverable Arrearage of ten thouſand Talents, was delivered to the Tormentors till he ſhould pay all his Debt. How are Men degenerated, and fallen lower than the Brute Creatures? *The Stork in the Heaven knows her appointed times; and the Turtle, and the Crane, and the Swallow obſerve the time of their coming; but Men know not the Judgment of the Lord.* This Conſideration made our compaſſionate Saviour dip his Words in Tears. *He beheld the City, and wept over it, ſaying, If thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in this thy day, the things that belong to thy Peace! but now they are hid from thine Eyes.* Jer. 8. 7.

O wretched deceived Souls! how long will you neglect a Saviour

and Salvation? How long ſhall *he wait to be gracious*, and expect your lingering Repentance in vain? Remember the time of Grace is limited: if you refuſe Obedience to the preſent Call, do you know he will renew the Offers of his Grace? *Now is the accepted Time, now is the Day of Salvation*: Will this *Now* laſt for ever? There is no *Now* of Favour and Hope in Hell. 'Tis true, God is merciful; and 'tis one of his Royal Titles, *The God of Patience*: though Threatnings are denounced againſt Sinners, and Judgments are ready to ſeize upon them, he repents and ſtops his Wrath: but there is no State more fearful in this World, than when Men by neglecting Repentance, make God *weary of repenting*. *When Patience has had its perfect Work* towards the Unrelenting and Unreformed, Juſtice ſucceeds: before God cuts off a Sinner, he cuts off all

all his Excuſes. Read with Fear the firſt of the *Proverbs*, *Becauſe I have called, and you refuſed; I will laugh at your Calamity, and mock when your Fear cometh.* God's Frown, much more his Scorn, is infinitely terrible and inſupportable. Thoſe who delay Repentance till the Body is diſeaſed all over, and Death is printed in the Countenance, and the languiſhing Lights are almoſt quench'd, and the vital Frame is near a Diſſolution, yet preſume a few Sighs will tranſport their Souls to Heaven, How juſt and dreadful will their Diſappointment be? However they *are deceived, God is not mocked; as a Man ſows, he ſhall reap.*

SERMON IX.

LUKE xiv. 23.

The Lord ſaid to the Servant, Compel them to come in, that my Houſe may be full.

II. I Am now to conſider the Means by which Men are wrought on to accept of the Invitations of Grace in the Goſpel. The Sum of what has been diſcourſed of ſinful and miſerable Man is this, The Underſtanding, the directing Faculty, is in ignorant Darkneſs, and a dead Slumber, not apprehenſive of his Miſery. A dead Eye does not ſee its want of Sight, nor a dead Heart feel its want of Life. If the Head be obſtructed with clammy Humours, the

the whole Body is without Senſe: for the Nerves have their Root in the Brain, and are the Channels to convey powerful Spirits, to give Senſe, and Vigor, and Motion to all the Parts. The Will is a fierce and free Faculty, commanding and active, perverted and ſtubborn againſt the holy Law of God. The Affections are exceedingly diſordered, and ſtrongly inclin'd to ſenſual Things that flatter them with Satisfaction, and very tumultuous and fiery againſt whatever ſhall croſs their natural Inclinations. Now how can one ſo ſtupid and refractory, be made ſoft and flexible to the Call of Mercy? As the *Epicurean* in *Tully* objects againſt the making of the World, *quæ machinæ qui vectes*, What Engines, what Leavers were uſed in raiſing this vaſt Fabrick? What he ſpoke in Deriſion, may be ſaid with Wonder; What Engines, what Inſtruments

are uſed in craning up a Soul ſunk below the Center, to the higheſt Heaven! What in making the new Creation, that is more glorious and laſting than the firſt! 'Tis a Work reſpectively impoſſible, not abſolutely, it can only be effected by the Power of God.

There is no Principle of Recovery left in fallen Man. The Converſion of him from Sin to Holineſs, and from the Creature to God, is a Miracle of Grace: if he converted himſelf, it were ſupermiraculous. God can by his commanding Power bring Light out of Darkneſs; but 'tis plainly impoſſible that Darkneſs ſhould produce Light.

The external Miniſtration of the Goſpel, without the concomitant Miniſtry of the Spirit, is ineffective. The Divineſt Preacher cannot ſoften *the Iron Sinew*, nor melt the *Heart of Stone*, nor make the Rock to trem-

ble.

ble. The Prophet *Iſaiah*, whoſe ſublime Eloquence overcomes all the admired Orators of the World, yet complains, *Who has believed our Report? to whom is the Arm of the Lord reveal'd?* The Angels of Light, if they were ſent from Heaven, and were in this ſenſe *miniſtring Spirits*, they could not by their Seraphick Zeal, and moſt excellent Eloquence change and reform Sinners. One evil Angel ſeduced and corrupted the beſt Man, *Adam*, in the State of Innocence and Happineſs: but a Council of good Angels cannot reſtore one Man, tho the leaſt tainted, to Holineſs and Felicity. No Creature can be a Creator; the Sanctification of a Sinner is a new Creation. 'Tis only *the Word of Life* ſpoken by *the Lord of Life*, that can raiſe dead Bodies and dead Souls. Suppoſe the Word of God be aſſiſted by his Rod, yet that will be ineffectual to cleanſe and change Iſa. 53.

their Hearts without Divine Grace. 'Tis according to the wiſe Order of God, whom the Word does not convert, the Rod is made uſe of to cure; and whom the Rod does not cure, the Sword cuts off.

Proſperity furniſhes the Carnal Appetites with delightful Objects, and Men are eaſily induced to neglect their Duty: like Children that forget their Leſſon when they are at play. Senſe that reigns in Beaſts, and ſhould ſerve in Men, is then predominant. But Affliction imbitters the carnal Sweets, and is a proper Means to fix the Thoughts, and reſtore the Mind to its Right and Juriſdiction: as Blows and hard Uſage bind up the ranging Fancy in diſtracted Perſons; tames and tires them, and thereby reduces them to Sobriety. Thus God is often pleaſed, by Afflictions, *to ſhew Men their Tranſgreſſions, to open their Ears to Diſcipline,*

Job 36.

pline, and effectually command them to return from their Iniquities. But without the Inſtruction of his Spirit joins with the Voice of the Rod, the utmoſt Effect of even ſharp and long Afflictions is a forc'd and fading Repentance. Conſtrained Devotion is like Fire ſtruck out of a Flint, hardly got, and ſoon gone. Thus 'tis ſaid of the *Iſraelites* in the Wilderneſs, *When he ſlew them, they ſought him, they return'd and ſought early after God; but their Heart was not right with him, neither were they ſtedfaſt in his Covenant.* How many open Rebels have been awaken'd by the fear of Death? and when they have taſted and ſeen the Terrors of the Lord, what Addreſſes, what Submiſſions, what Promiſes have they made to God? but after their Reprieve, how ſoon have they forgot the paſt Terrors, and broke all the Bars of Reaſon, and of their Reſolutions, and been as unre-

unreform'd as ever. The wiſe Man tells us, *Bray a Fool in a Mortar, pound him in pieces, his Folly will remain in him.*

Nay, Miracles without the Application of them by Grace to the Spirits of Men, are ineffectual to work Faith and Repentance. The End of them is by the Evidence of Senſe to excite the Mind, to conſider the Power that works them. But they may aſtoniſh the Senſe, and the Mind not be convinc'd; or if convinc'd, yet they leave no permanent Operation upon the Hearts of the Spectators. *Moſes* charges the *Iſraelites* that notwithſtanding they had ſeen all the miraculous Strokes of God's Power upon *Pharaoh* and his Servants, *yet the Lord hath not given you an Heart to perceive, and Eyes to ſee, and Ears to hear to this day.* When the Son of God appear'd in his own Likeneſs, and did ſuch numerous and conſpi-

Deut. 29. 4.

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cuous Miracles that compell'd the moſt ſtubborn Devils to acknowledg his Deity, yet the *Phariſees* remained obſtinate and inconvincible. The Souldiers who ſaw him riſing in Power and Glory, and were almoſt frighten'd to Death at the ſight, yet continued obdurate in their Infidelity.

Our Saviour aſſures us, *No Man can come to him, except the Father which hath ſent me, draw him.* The Words are full of Emphaſis, *No Man*: the Negation is univerſal; not only the Act is denied, *No Man comes*, but the Power, *can come*; no leſs than Omnipotent Grace draws him. A carnal Man will *not come to Chriſt for Life*; and he cannot will to come: for his Mind is ſo fore-laid with Prejudice, and his Will is ſo depraved and intangled with the love of Sin, that he cannot ſincerely * deſire to be ſet free. Every delightful Sin is like a charm'd Circle out

John 6. 44.

* Nec te poſſe carere velim.

out of which the Sinner cannot move.

We are not to conceive of this Disability, as if Sinners had not deliberative and elective Faculties to consider and chooſe what is beſt: ſuch a Disability would be an Argument for their Innocence and Juſtification: Neither as if Men had a Will to forſake Sin, and wanted Power; like a miſerable Slave that ſighs after Liberty, but is faſten'd by heavy Fetters: but the perverſe Will keeps them in Bondage: *They ſerve divers Luſts and Pleaſures*, and delight in their Fetters. 'Tis a voluntary culpable Impotence join'd with a ſtrong Reluctancy to Grace: 'tis the *impudent imperious Weakneſs of the Whoriſh Woman* charged upon the *Iſraelites*, and admits of no Apology and Defence; Nay, it aggravates the Sin and Sentence of ſuch depraved Creatures. As there is in Vertue and Holineſs a Divine Degree

gree of Perfection, that makes Perſons not capable of departing from their Duty: ſo there is a Diabolical Degree in Sin, when the Soul is ſo depraved, that it cannot abſtain from doing Evil. And as conſummate Vertue is moſt worthy of Eſteem and Praiſe; ſo when a vicious Habit contracted by long Cuſtom in Sin, abſolutely poſſeſſes the Soul, 'tis moſt worthy of Abhorrence.

Now only Divine Grace *compels Sinners to come to Chriſt*, and to partake of ſaving Mercies: that is, changes the Biaſs of the Will, and makes it obedient to the Heavenly Call. God is the ſupream Mover, and turns all Occurrences in the World to his Purpoſe and Praiſe: and the Hearts of Men are not exempt from his Dominion, but he *turns them as the Rivers of Waters.* The effectual Operation of Grace does not violate the native Freedom of the Will,

Will, but is congruous to it. God's *drawing is by teaching: Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father, comes to me.* When the Author of the Goſpel is the Teacher of it, the moſt ſtupid and obſtinate Sinners ſhall be convinc'd and obedient. To make this more clear, I will briefly conſider the Intellectual Frame of Man, and the natural Subordination of the Faculties in their various Operations. As the Spring in a Watch, ſo the Underſtanding is the firſt Mover in the reaſonable Creature: the Underſtanding has a double Faculty; the Apprehenſive, to diſcover the Good and Evil in Objects preſented to it; and the Judicative, to compare and ponder the Good and Evil diſcern'd in things; and accordingly to eſteem or diſvalue, to approve or diſlike. The Will chooſes what the Underſtanding commends, and rejects what the Judgment condemns. The

Affecti-

Affections of Deſire and Delight are from the Choice of the Will, the Affections of Averſation and Flight are from the Rejection of the Will. The Purſuit or Neglect of Things, the Application or Oppoſition we make in our Actions and Practice to them, is from the Delight or Diſtaſte of Things in our Affections. But when Luſt enter'd into the Soul, it perverted this Order. As the ſtrong Tide of the Sea pouring into Rivers, turns them back to their Springs, in a Courſe contrary to their natural Motion: thus the Heart overflowing with a ſtrong Tide of Corruption, empties it ſelf into the Head the Spring of Actions: the unholy Affections work upon the Will to reject the Offers of Grace in the Goſpel; and the corrupt Will works upon the Mind to vilify them. 'Tis to be obſerv'd, that the Tempter works upon Mens Minds in the unnatural way;

way; he makes uſe of the diſorder'd Affections to pervert the Will, and of the perverted Will to divert the Underſtanding from due Conſideration of Objects, and to corrupt its Judgment. But God works by the Underſtanding on the Will and Affections, according to the regular Dependance of thoſe Faculties.

The firſt Beam of ſaving Grace ſhines into the Mind with ſo ſtrong a Light, diſcovering Spiritual and Eternal Things in their Reality and Glory, that the Will and Affections are drawn to chooſe, and embrace, and to follow them with Zeal and Conſtancy. In this bleſſed Work, we are to conſider the Revelation of the Object, and the Irradiation of the Mind. As in the diſcerning of Corporal things, there muſt be Light in the Eye, or there can be no Seeing, and Light in the Air, or there can be no Sight: So the great Myſteries of Godlineſs, which

which are of impoſſible diſcovery without Revelation, are made known in the Goſpel; and the Underſtanding is illuminated to ſee them in their Reality and tranſcendent Goodneſs, as the Apoſtle expreſſes, *This is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Jeſus Chriſt is come into the World to ſave Sinners.* He prays for the *Epheſians*, *That the God of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt,* Epheſ. 1. *the Father of Glory, may give them the Spirit of Wiſdom and Revelation, in the Knowledg of him; that the Eyes of their Underſtanding being inlightened, they may know what is the Hope of his Calling, and what the Riches of the Glory of his Inheritance in the Saints.* Altho the Evidence of Faith be not ſo clear as that of Senſe, yet 'tis ſo ſure, that the Adherence of Faith is more firm to its Objects, tho future, than of Senſe to things preſent. With the Irradiation of the Mind there is ſuch a determining

fluence on the Will and the Affections, that Chriſt and Heaven are joyfully choſen before all things. In converting Sinners there is not a bare propoſal of the Objects of Faith, with the Motives to believe and accept them, and Men are left to their own Diſcretion and Choice: The Holy Ghoſt who certainly knows the manner and efficacy of his own Operations, expreſſes converting Grace *by the*
Epheſ. 1. *exceeding Greatneſs of his Power toward them that believe, according to the working of his mighty Power, which he wrought in Chriſt when he raiſed him from the Dead, and ſet him at his own Right-hand in Heaven.* 'Tis true, the Principle of Reſiſtance in corrupt Nature is not quite extinguiſh'd; but actual Reſiſtance is overcome by the holy Spirit, who works *to will and to do of his good Pleaſure.*

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In the Human Will we are to conſider the Faculty of chooſing and refuſing, which includes in it Freedom and Liberty, without which it ceaſes to be a Will. 2. The Depravation of it: and this conſiſts in a neceſſity of chooſing the Evil of Sin, repreſented as pleaſing to the Carnal Affections, and rejecting the Law of God, which is holy and good. The ſinning Will contracted this neceſſity. Now Grace does not deſtroy the Nature of the Will, but changes its Quality: of Carnal and Earthly makes it Holy and Heavenly: this is expreſt *by a new Heart, and a new Spirit.* And *when the Spirit of the Mind is renewed by* illuminating Grace, and the Will and Affections of the Heart are renewed by purifying Grace, the Will does as freely and neceſſarily chooſe Spiritual and Eternal Things, as in the State of Nature it choſe Things pleaſing to

the corrupt Appetites. God draws Sinners to himſelf with *the Cords of a Man*, in a rational way, without Violence to their Faculties, and faſtens them *by Bands of Love*. He inſtructs the Soul, and infuſes ſuch a Principle and Diſpoſition as is ſutable to the Doctrine. When the Will is directed and drawn, by the illuminating Guidance of the Mind, to chooſe and embrace the moſt excellent Good, and the other Faculties to obey, this is Man's true Liberty. In Heaven the unvariable fixing the Will upon God our Supream Good, is its Perfection and Felicity.

The outward Means of inducing Men to comply with God's Call, is the preaching of the Word. If it were the Will of God, he can immediately create Men as *Adam*, in compleat Stature, and with the Perfection of Reaſon; but he makes uſe of Second Cauſes, forms them

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in the Womb, brings them into the World by the ordinary way of the Earth, and raiſes them from Infancy to a mature State, according to the Rules of Nature. Thus God could by one Act ſanctify Sinners in Perfection; but he is pleaſed by the preaching of the Word to convert Sinners, and gradually perfect the Saints: The Go- 2 Cor. 5.
ſpel is the Miniſtry of Reconciliation, and of Regeneration. And James 1.
this is very congruous to the Human Nature: for the Sinner is not converted, as a Stone aſcends by a forc'd and blind Motion, but is inſtructed and affected by propoſing Objects to his Mind and Will, and acts according to the Impreſſion he received from them. Now the Natural Man being *a Servant to Corruption*, the external propounding of the moſt powerful Objects and Motives cannot change him: the converting Efficacy of the Word

is from Jeſus Chriſt. To make this more evident, let us conſider, In every Action where an Inſtrument is us'd, the Action is properly aſcrib'd to the Agent. God is a pure Spirit, without any Compoſition of bodily Organs of Speech; yet when he form'd a Voice in the Air for the proclaiming the Law,
Exod. 20. 1. *He ſpake*; and whether by any created Voice, or by the Voice of
Deut. 5. 4. Men appointed for preaching the Goſpel, he ſpeaks. In human ſpeaking, the Voice is from the Tongue, but the Senſe and Meaning is from the Mind that directs it. From hence it is that the Goſpel preached is of admirable Efficacy, and works above the Power of any Creature.
Heb. 4. 12. *The Word of God is quick and powerful, and ſharper than any two-edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing aſunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow; and is a Diſcerner of the Thoughts and Intents of*

of the Heart. It ſubdues open Rebels, and makes their Pride and Confidence fall as low as Hell; it mollifies the moſt obdurate, and makes them compliant to the Invitations of Grace. And altho the Miniſter be never ſo mean in his Perſon and Appearance, yet a weak Inſtrument in an Almighty Hand does Wonders.

Our bleſſed Saviour in his Perſon was the firſt Preacher of the Goſpel; and in his Sermons we are directed how to work upon the Reaſon, and the Affections of Sinners, by which alone they are capable to be moved. The Subſtance of his ſeveral Sermons was, *Repent ye, and believe the Goſpel.* Mark 1.

1. The Order and Progreſs of converting Grace is by the Conviction of the Mind, to turn the Will and Affections. Sin prevails in Men by the *love of Pleaſure*; and

till there be a mixture of what is more bitter than Sin is ſweet, they will not forſake it. *The World corrupted by Luſt*, is an imaginary Paradiſe, wherein there is nothing but *forbidden Fruit*; and the Fruit is ſo pleaſant to the Eyes and Taſte, that only flaming Terrors will expel them out of it. No Man will cut off his Right-hand till an incurable Gangreen has ſeiz'd on it. The light neglected Notions of Heaven are ineffective to reform Sinners; till the Terrors of the Lord are ſet in array againſt them, they are faſten'd in their Sins. Of this there is viſible and frequent Experience: how many that have lived in a careleſs Contempt of God till their laſt Sickneſs, and when they feel themſelves ſinking to the Grave and Hell, and Conſcience is an exact Remembrancer and terrible Accuſer of all their inward Wickedneſs and notorious Sins,

then

then what furious Reflections do they make upon themſelves? and what Promiſes do they make if they might be ſpar'd? 'Tis therefore the firſt Duty of Miniſters, by clearing Light and convincing Strength to work on Conſcience, and by the Mediation of it to apply Guilt and Wrath to the Sinner, that he may be reſtleſs in his Sins. *The Wrath of God is revealed from Heaven againſt all Ungodlineſs, and Unrighteouſneſs of Men*: 'tis decreed before the World was, 'tis denounc'd in the Word, and ſhall be fully executed in the *Day of Wrath, and the Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God*: nothing is more certain than that Day, and nothing ſo heavy as that Wrath. 'Tis a Burden ſo inſupportable, that the Son of God was ready to ſink under its Weight: he meekly and ſilently endur'd all the cruel Rage of his Enemies, but mournfully broke forth, *My God*, Rom. 1.

God, my God, Why haſt thou forſaken me! Who can underſtand the Conſequence of that Complaint? Who can ſupport himſelf under the Apprehenſion of an abſent and angry God? When the convinced Perſon ponders his Sins, what Indignities he has offered to the glorious God his Maker and Preſerver, his Lawgiver and Judg; that he has abus'd his Mercies, perverted his Benefits, and emploied them in the Service of Satan; that he has deſpis'd his Juſtice, and ventur'd upon his inflam'd Anger for tranſient Pleaſure and trifling Profits; when theſe killing Aggravations are duly conſider'd and laid cloſe to the Heart, how are all the ſorrowful Affections moved? ſerious Grief that ſprings from the Depth of the Soul, confounding Shame, anxious inquiring Fear, to ſtop the Execution of the fatal Sentence paſt againſt him? Thus 'tis related of

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thoſe Converts at the firſt Sermon of St. *Peter*, that being convinc'd of their Crimſon Guilt in their crucifying of the Lord Jeſus, *they were pricked in their Heart, and ſaid to the Apoſtles, Men and Brethren, what ſhall we do?* Then Sinners will humbly ſue for Peace by the bleſſed Peacemaker Jeſus Chriſt: then Salvation will be ſo much the ſweeter, by how much the Danger was more threatning. The Recovery from Death to Life is a double Life.

2. The Lord Jeſus muſt be propos'd as an all-ſufficient and compaſſionate Saviour, *who invites the weary and heavy-laden to come to him for Reſt.* This is the order of the Spirit's Operations, *firſt to convince of Sin, then of Righteouſneſs.* 'Tis true, there are diverſities of Workings; the Spirit inſtructs and terrifies Sinners by his Office of Bondage, but not always in the ſame manner and degrees: but the Soul is ſo humbled by

by the ſight of Sin, and impendent Wrath, as it ſees and feels the neceſſity of a Saviour, and is willing to comply with the Terms of Mercy offered in the Goſpel. *The whole need not a Phyſician, but thoſe who are ſick.* A condemned Man values a Sheet of Paper wherein his Pardon is written and ſealed, more than the Conveyance of a rich Eſtate. One near drowning values a Cord thrown out for his Reſcue, more than a Crown. Thus when the Guilty are deeply ſenſible they have loſt the Favour of God, and cannot fly from his Power, and there is but a ſtep between them and Eternal Death, then a Saviour will be infinitely precious, and they will entirely cloſe with him. Now the Goſpel repreſents the Son of God incarnate.

1*ſt*. An all-ſufficient Saviour by his Propitiation, and Interceſſion. The Excellency of his Obedience, and

and the Excellency of his Perſon were influential to obtain the Pardon of Sin. His Propriety in the Sacrifice, and the Value of it, was requiſite to atone the juſt Diſpleaſure of God for our Offences. 'Tis ſaid, he *offered his own Body on the Tree*: his peculiar Right in it was requiſite to make it a proper and acceptable Sacrifice. 'Tis true, the Father and holy Spirit had the ſame Right in the Human Nature of Chriſt as the Son had, with reſpect to the making it: but the Son by aſſuming it into a Perſonal Union with himſelf, has a peculiar Right in it, and offer'd his own in a ſtrict ſenſe. And in Conſequence to this, his Sacrifice was of infinite Value: He did not compound with God, but paid a Ranſom equivalent to what was due for Sinners. He bled a Fountain from his wounded Side, *that cleanſes from all Sin.* 1 Joh. 2.

2*dly*. By

2*dly*. By his Interceſſion. *He is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all that come to God by him, for he ever lives to make Interceſſion for them.* God pardons Sin as a Soveraign upon the Throne: his Authority is preſerved entire without any Condeſcenſion of his Perſon; therefore the Blood of Chriſt ſhed on the Croſs, is pleaded in Heaven to reconcile God to us: he ſatisfied Juſtice, and ſollicites Mercy: *his Blood ſpeaks ſtill*, and its Voice is as powerful as ever. The Prevalency of his Interceſſion depends upon the Dignity of his Sacrifice; the Dearneſs of his Perſon to the Father, does alſo aſſure us of his favourable Audience. He declar'd on Earth, *I know thou always heareſt me.*

3*dly*. The Goſpel ſets forth his Willingneſs to ſave us. Faith has an Aſpect upon Chriſt as able and willing to ſave: for Power without a Will to ſave is unprofitable,

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and the Will without Power is fruitleſs and ineffectual. For the begetting of Faith we are to conſider the Propoſal and Offer of Grace in the Goſpel, and the Promiſe of it.

1. In the Goſpel there is a Propoſal of Grace to all: the Invitation is univerſal; *Whoever will, let him come to the Waters of Life freely.* Our Saviour gave this Command to the Apoſtles, *Preach the Goſpel to every Creature.* Neither the number nor quality of Mens Sins are a Bar againſt their coming to Chriſt for Life. None are excluded but thoſe who exclude themſelves. In the Parable thoſe *were earneſtly invited by the Command of the Maſter of the Feaſt, who refuſed to come.* This Offer of Grace and Life to all that will humbly receive it, is the firſt Foundation of Faith, and induces our Acceptance of it: for without this, the

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ſelf-condemned Sinner ſinks into Miſery bottomleſs and helpleſs. The moſt miſerable Deſpair is drawn from Impoſſibility. If Men think 'tis impoſſible to obtain what they deſire, they will not endeavour to obtain. 'Tis eaſily clear'd by the Scriptures, if Men will believe the Scriptures when they are clear, that as the Brazen Serpent, the Sign of Salvation, was lifted up on high, and made obvious to every Eye, to convey healing Virtue to thoſe who were ſtung by the fiery Serpents; ſo our crucified Saviour is lifted up in the Goſpel for every Soul-wounded Sinner to regard. The belief of inviting Mercy opens the Springs of Godly Sorrow: a Natural Sorrow ariſes from the ſenſe of oppreſſing Evils, and is terminated upon our ſelves: a Spiritual Sorrow proceeds from the ſenſe of our Unworthineſs, and the

Divine

Divine Goodneſs, that is ſo ready and deſirous to ſave us.

2. There is a Promiſe of Grace to all that repent and believe. Our Saviour encourages us, *Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you Reſt.* Thoſe who feel Sin as an intolerable Burden, and their fainting Souls are without Support, let them devolve their Burden upon him, and truſt entirely in him, they ſhall obtain bleſſed Reſt. The timerous Sinners that tremble under the Weight of their Guilt, are encouraged; for in this condition Chriſt invites them to come to him, and promiſes Reſt. Let them aggravate their Sins to the higheſt, yet St. *Paul* challenges the Precedence as the chief of Sinners, and obtained Mercy. When the Heart is broken for Sin, and from it, not to believe the Promiſe of Mercy, is diſhonourable to our Saviour's Love, and the Value of

his Blood, as if not ſufficient to ſave poor Souls that would fain live in him. We have the ſtrongeſt Teſtimony of his Love, in dying for us when we were Enemies. Chriſt came with this Intention to ſave Sinners; and when they come to him, will he reject them? He cannot deny himſelf, he's Truth, and he has moſt expreſly declar'd, *Whoever comes to me, I will in no wiſe caſt out*: and this Promiſe is confirm'd by the *Will of his Father that ſent him.* Chriſt invites thirſty Souls to partake of the Waters of Life; and when he has inſpir'd them with ardent Deſires, and they come, will he ſend them away empty? 'Tis abſolutely impoſſible for him who is incarnate Love and Mercy, to deſpiſe and reject the Soul that looks to him, that longs and languiſhes after him, and will be ever unſatisfied without him.

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In ſhort, the precious Promiſes in the Goſpel, of the Pardon of Sin, and eternal Salvation, are ſo propoſed to us, that the Hope of returning Sinners may be cheriſh'd and confirm'd, and the Preſumption of ſecure Sinners may be daſh'd and controul'd. While we are in this middle State, the fear of Caution, join'd with the lively hope of Mercy, is the moſt congruous Temper, and becoming the Breaſt of a Chriſtian. The Preſumer is like a Ship without Ballaſt, floating ſo lightly in his own Folly, that every Guſt of Temptation overſets him. The fearful Spirit is like a Ship over-laden; and if not lightned, will certainly ſink and periſh. Fearleſs Security expoſes to all the Temptations that gratify the Carnal Appetites: deſponding Fear cauſes a neglect of the Remedy. If there be no fear of Puniſhment,

niſhment, or no hope of Pardon, the Conſequences are equally fatal.

3. 'Tis neceſſary in order to the bringing Men to Chriſt, to remove their carnal Prejudices. The firſt and moſt fear'd Difficulties are, That ſerious Religion will be a damp to all their Joys, a harſh and unreaſonable Reſtraint of their Liberties, a Bar againſt all the Advantages of the World: the ſickly Fancy is frighten'd at the thoughts of this. If the Way to Heaven were ſhort and fair, Men would like it; but 'tis long and deep, and they are diſcouraged, as the *Iſraelites* with the tedious and troubleſom Wilderneſs, before their arrival at the Land of Promiſe. Accordingly Carnal Men caſt a ſlanderous Shade upon Religion, as a melancholy, ſevere and joyleſs Diſcipline. Now we may rectify theſe Miſtakes by

by the Light of Scripture, of Reaſon, and of Experience.

(1.) The Scripture declares *that the Ways of Wiſdom are Ways of Pleaſantneſs, and all her Paths are Peace.* Prov. 3. 17. The Entrance, the Progreſs, and Continuance in theſe Ways, is joyful to the renewed Soul. Let us take a right View of the Divine Commands, the Sum of them is this, That Men would be happy here, and for ever. We are commanded *to know God and Jeſus Chriſt, this is our Life*: to truſt in him, this is our Strength: to love him and delight in him: And are not Love and Joy the moſt pleaſant Affections? and is not God the moſt amiable and pleaſing Object? We are commanded to fear him: and is it not moſt reaſonable to fear the loſs of his Favour, which is Heaven, and the incurring his Wrath, that is the deepeſt Hell? John 17. 3. Iſa. 30. 15. Pſal. 37.

We are commanded to obey his Laws; and our Saviour aſſures us, *his Yoke is eaſy, and his Burden is light*: 'tis an eaſy and eaſing Yoke, that frees us from the moſt cruel Bondage of Sin and Satan. And will not Men believe the Teſtimony of Eternal Truth, rather than their fond Fancies and corrupt Appetites? We are commanded to hear his Word; and is it not a Happineſs to be directed in the way to everlaſting Life? We are commanded *to pray continually*; Is it not a bleſſed Privilege that poor Duſt may addreſs their Requeſts to the *Lord Almighty, the Poſſeſſor of Heaven and Earth*, with an Aſſurance, that thoſe Petitions are moſt pleaſing to him, that are for his moſt excellent Bleſſings?

Beſides this, nothing is forbid but ſinful Pleaſures that will end in eternal Torments: ſinful Profits

fits, *the gaining of the World, with the loſs of the Soul*: the Gain is nothing, and the Loſs is infinite. Now where are the Chains and Fetters that are ſo hard and heavy as Carnal Men complain of? All his Commands are Precepts of Happineſs.

(2.) This Teſtimony of Scripture, Carnal Men eſteem a notorious Paradox: they can taſte no Pleaſures but what are ſteep'd in Senſe. Take away the Enticings and Blandiſhments of the Carnal Appetites, they underſtand no other Pleaſure: which is ſuch a Deceit, as if a ſick Perſon who feels no Pleaſure but in the ſoft and eaſy Intermiſſions of his Diſeaſe, ſhould conclude if he were entirely freed from it, he ſhould be deprived of all Pleaſure. Whereas the Pleaſure of Health is far more deſirable and conſtant. The Angels are ab-

ſolutely exempt from the Deſires of our carnal Faculties, and without carnal Fruitions, but are ever bleſſed and joyful in the direct Poſſeſſion of what is good, not in the relief from Evils either natural or accidental, as Hunger and Thirſt, or Sickneſs and Pain.

Pleaſure reſults from the ſuitableneſs between the perceptive Faculties and the Objects that affect them: if there be no harmonious Proportion, there will be no Muſick, no Delight. Now 'tis true, while Fleſh is the prevailing Ingredient in a Man, he only reliſhes the Satisfactions of the Senſes: he cannot enjoy God, he cannot delight in doing his Will, no more than a Swine can in clean Paſture, whoſe natural Property ſtrongly inclines it to wallow in the Mire. But when the Soul is clarified and purged by the great Refiner,

Refiner, how ſublime and ſatisfying a Pleaſure does it feel in the Love of God, and in his Service! As in natural feeding, when the Palat is in its due Temper, the Taſte commends our proper Food to the Appetite, and the Appetite to the Stomach; but a foul Stomach diſaffects the Appetite, vitiates the Pallate, and the moſt ſavoury and wholſom Meat is loathſom when the Diſeaſe is the Taſter: Thus if the Soul be in its due Temper, the doing the Will of God would be *our Meat and Drink*, mixt with a ſweeter Pleaſure than thoſe natural Operations are: but the Soul is ſo corrupt and carnaliz'd, that it has no Taſte of the pure Delights of bleſſed Spirits in Communion with God: like the *Iſraelites* who deſpis'd the Bread of Angels, and impatiently longed for the Onions and Garlick and Fleſh-pots of *Egypt*. Till

Men

Men die to Sin, the Supper of the Lamb will be inſipid and nauſeous.

The Carnal Mind as groſly miſtakes about Liberty. 'Tis horrible Folly to think true Freedom conſiſts in doing whatever the vicious Affections require, in converſing with ſuch Perſons as foment and gratify them. Is that Perſon free that is fetter'd with as many Chains of Hell, as he has predominant Luſts? Was the poſſeſt Perſon free who lived among the Tombs, among contagious Carcaſes? Then a Sinner, that without the fear of Hell obeys his depraved Appetites, and aſſociates with thoſe who are corrupt, and Corrupters by their wicked Example, is free. But 'tis evident that the Mind, the ſuperiour leading Faculty, is in Bondage while the Paſſions reign, and the ſenſual Worldly Wretch with his

his imaginary Liberty, is the moſt accurſed Slave. *Till the Son makes us free from the tyrannous Power of Sin, we are not free indeed.* Till Reaſon enlighten'd by the Word, reſumes its Right and Juriſdiction, and leads the Will to chooſe what is beſt for a ſpiritual immortal Creature, and the other Faculties to obey, we are the Slaves of Satan. *When we are made free from Sin, and become the Servants of Righteouſneſs,* Rom. 6. and yield an ingenuous delightful Subjection to God's Laws, we enjoy a State of Liberty. Nay, the Service of God is our Glory. *He that loved us, and waſh'd us from our Sins in his Blood, has made us Kings and Prieſts to God.* The moſt eminent Acts of Royal Authority are to govern the Subjects by equal Laws, and to ſubdue the Enemies of the Peace and Proſperity of the Kingdom: and when Divine Grace reigns

reigns in the Heart, it regulates all the Thoughts and Affections, the inward and outward Faculties, according to the holy, juſt and good Law of God, and ſubdues theſe rebellious Luſts that diſturb the Order and Tranquillity of the Soul.

(3.) Experience proves that a State of Religion is moſt delightful. Whenever the captive Soul is reſcued from the Bondage of his Luſts, and prefer'd to the Service of God, how ſweet is the Change? and how bitterly will he complain, *other Lords have had Dominion over me*, but thy Service is the trueſt Freedom? Did ever any of the Saints complain that God is an auſtere Maſter, that his Service is a melancholy joyleſs Condition? No, in their Eſteem and Affections, his Law is the moſt pure, precious, ſweet and profitable Good. Pſal. 19. *His Commands are not grievous*: they obey

obey them from Choice and Complacence. They love the Lawgiver, and like the Laws. Communion with God in his holy Ordinances, is a Heaven upon Earth to them. *One day in thy Courts is better than a thouſand* in the Vanities and Buſineſs of the World. *In the Preſence of God is Fulneſs of Joy*; and the more we are admitted into his Preſence here, the more we are admitted into his Joy: all the bleſſed Means of our drawing near to God, and his drawing near to us, are the Gate of Heaven, and Entrance into Glory. *David*, who was ſo acquainted with God, declares, *There be many that ſay, Who will ſhew us any Good? Lord, lift thou up the Light of thy Countenance upon me. Thou haſt put more Joy into my Heart, than when their Corn and Wine increaſed.* A Joy more ſolid and ſatisfying, than carnal Men receive in the Springtide of their Fruitions. As one Pſal. 84.

Spark

Spark of God's Wrath firing the Conſcience, is more terrible than the moſt fearful Evils in the World: ſo one Beam of his Favour enlightning the Soul, is more ſweet and raviſhing, than all the moſt valued and deſir'd things in the World.

SER-

SERMON X.

LUKE xiv. 23.

The Lord ſaid to the Servant, Compel them to come in, that my Houſe may be full.

III. I Shall now prove 'tis the great Duty of the Miniſters of Chriſt to apply themſelves with a holy Zeal to bring Men to partake of the ſaving Mercies of the Goſpel.

This will appear by conſidering,

1. The Command of God, from whom they are ſent, lays the higheſt Obligation upon them to perform their Duty. The manner and degrees of Obedience, are meaſured by the greatneſs of the Authority that enjoins it. To Soveraign Authority,

thority, immediate, abſolute, and ſupream Obedience is due. The Authority of God is more binding than the higheſt in Princes, or the deareſt in Parents: What are all Kings of the Earth to him? leſs than nothing. Temporal Greatneſs conſiſts only in Compariſon. In the Scale of Magiſtracy, the Superiors to ſome are ſubordinate to others: But the Majeſty of God is abſolutely and truly Infinite. And as the immediate Servants of the King are under ſpecial Obligations to obey his Commands, beſides the common Duty of his other Subjects; ſo the Miniſters of the Goſpel by their Conſecration and immediate Relation to God, are bound with all zealous Diligence to do his Will.

2. 'Tis the principal End of their Commiſſion. God deſigns in the Contrivance and Revelation of

of the Goſpel, to glorify his Mercy, and his Son in our Salvation.

Firſt, Love is the cleareſt and moſt adequate Notion of the Deity; *God* is *Love*. Now Mercy is medicinal, healing, and recovering Love. The Object of it is the Miſerable and Unworthy. In God's Moral Government, Mercy and Juſtice are the leading Attributes, and Mercy in its Exerciſe has the Supremacy: *Mercy rejoices againſt Judgment*. When our firſt Parents were cited to Judgment for their rebellious Sin, Mercy promis'd a Saviour before the Sentence was pronounc'd. God is ſtiled the *Father of Mercies*; 'tis his natural Off-ſpring, the freeſt and moſt delightful Emanation from him. Judgment is his *ſtrange Work*, that by Conſtraint he executes. *He does not afflict willingly the Children of Men*: God is more pleaſed to ſee the Fruits of his Mercy in his Creatures

reſtor'd to Happineſs, than the Effects of his Juſtice in the Guilty and Miſerable. To be inclin'd to do Evil and Hurt, is an Imperfection infinitely diſtant and oppoſite to the Divine Nature. *The Lord God is a Sun*: and as 'tis proper to it to enlighten, revive and refreſh the World by its Operations and Influences; 'tis accidental to conſume and deſtroy, and proceeds from the Imperfection of Things upon whom his Beams fall. Thus 'tis according to the Nature of God to diſpenſe the liberal Effuſions of his Goodneſs to the Creatures; if they feel the Effects of his Juſtice, 'tis for Sin that deſerves it, and draws it forth into Exerciſe. Mercy is God's Glory: by Glory we underſtand the Luſtre that reſults from the Perfection of Things, and is attractive and worthy of Admiration. There is Light in one Beam of the Sun; but Glory reſults

ſults from the Union of all its Beams in their full Strength. Accordingly a double Glory belongs to God.

1*ſt*. His Eſſential Glory, that reſults from his tranſcendent Excellencies; the ſupream Beauty and Brightneſs of that *unapproachable Light* wherein he is ſaid *to dwell*: every Attribute being truly infinite, is moſt glorious.

2*dly*. Declarative Glory, that conſiſts in the Operation and Influence of God's Perfections, and in the humble and thankful Adoration of them by intelligent Creatures. Some Divine Attributes are more eminently the Glory of God: as they are more declarative of his Perfections, and more ſenſibly and powerfully affect the Minds and Hearts of Men. In this reſpect Mercy, as 'tis the moſt benign and comfortable, ſo 'tis the brighteſt Light in all the Conſtellation of

the Divine Attributes; 'tis our Happineſs we are under it Aſpects and Influences. The other eſſential Excellencies of God are regarded as the Qualities of our Soveraign infinitely above us, with moſt humble Fear and reſpectful Admiration: But his Mercy repreſents him as our Father and Friend, and engages our Affections entirely to him. When *Moſes* deſir'd to *ſee God's Glory*, he told him, *his Goodneſs ſhould paſs before him.* Now Mercy is the moſt excellent Degree of Goodneſs. 'Tis Goodneſs primarily excited and active from it ſelf, and takes occaſion from the Miſery of the Creature to be beneficent. 'Tis obſervable, when he was proclaimed in his glorious Titles, *The Lord, the Lord God, Merciful and Gracious*; next to the Deity, Mercy is plac'd as his deareſt Attribute: and of the thirteen Titles of Honour attributed to him, nine belong to Mercy, to ſignify

ſignify the advantage it has above Juſtice. Mercy is his peculiar Treaſure: 'tis ſaid *he is rich in Mercy*, not in Poſſeſſions, *tho the Earth is the Lord's, and the fulneſs thereof*: his Riches are not without himſelf, but in his own Perfections. Now 'tis the great Deſign of God to glorify this Attribute in the Salvation of the Loſt and Miſerable. *Adam* had ſufficient Grace to ſtand, but was free to fall, and by the Fraud of Satan join'd with his own Folly, was ſeduc'd from his Duty, and involv'd himſelf and all his Progeny in utter Ruin. It was very becoming God that his Enemy ſhould not obtain his End, that Mankind ſhould not be the eternal Trophy of the Tempter, and ſo noble a part of the Creation be as it were aboliſh'd for ever. From hence the Mercy of God took its Riſe, and moſt apparently and eminently declar'd it ſelf, in ſending his Son the

Heir of his Love and Glory, to be the Redeemer and Ranſom of the Loſt and Miſerable.

The Goſpel is made up of Arguments and Endearments, of Commands and compaſſionate Calls, of incouraging Invitations, and the moſt conſtraining Motives, that ſinful Men would apply themſelves to our bleſſed Saviour, and not periſh for ever in their Sins. And God has appointed an Order of Men conſecrated to this Service. This is moſt excellently expreſt by the Apoſtle; *Now we are Embaſſadors for Chriſt, as tho God did beſeech you by us, we pray you in Chriſt's ſtead, be reconciled to God.* From hence the Duty of Evangelical Miniſters is clear and conſequent, that with zealous Affections and perſevering Diligence they ſhould endeavour to bring Souls to partake of the Grace of the Goſpel. An Objection may be raiſed.

2 Cor. 5.

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If God be pleaſed with the Salvation of ſinful Men, why are not all ſaved? for nothing is the Object of his Will, but is within the compaſs of his Power.

The Objection is ſpecious, and may ſurprize at firſt, but duly conſidered, may receive a ſufficient Anſwer.

1. 'Tis a leading Rule, that when Doctrines are clearly revealed in the Scripture, we muſt yield our Aſſent, tho we cannot reſolve all the Difficulties that are raiſed againſt them. 'Tis unreaſonable to deny what is evident, becauſe we cannot unfold what is obſcure. There is no Doctrine more frequently and emphatically aſſerted in the Divine Writings, than that the Repentance of a Sinner, and his acceptance of Pardon and Life is very pleaſing to God. He aſſures us in the moſt ſacred and ſolemn manner of this: *As I live, ſaith the Lord,* Ezek. 33. 11.

Lord, I have no pleaſure in the Death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his way, and live: He is willing they ſhould be ſaved, and they are wilful to be damned. With what tender and melting Compaſſions does he argue with them, *Why will ye die, O Houſe of* Iſrael? as if they were upon the brink of Hell, and ready to drop into irrecoverable Miſery.

2. We muſt diſtinguiſh between his directing Will, and his approving Will: whatever God decrees to effect, ſhall be infallibly accompliſh'd; but many things that he approves, are left undone. His Commands are his Will, the Rule of our Duty, but not of his Purpoſe what he will do. The Scripture mentions *the Word of God's Power*, and *the Word of his Holineſs*. The Word of his Power effects all things according to his Will: but the Word of his Holineſs, his

his Laws declar'd to regulate our Lives, are often oppos'd, and without Efficacy.

3. The Wiſdom of God directs all the Operations of his Attributes; that orders the Diſpenſations of Mercy, and the Inflictions of Juſtice. When the Apoſtle had conſidered the aſtoniſhing Oeconomy of Providence with reſpect to the Jews and Gentiles, he breaks forth, *O the Depth of the Riches both of the Wiſdom and Knowledg of God! How unſearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways paſt finding out!* That ſo great a part of the World live in Darkneſs, and die in Darkneſs, and go to their Fathers where they ſhall never ſee Light, and the Day-ſpring from on high viſits other Nations, is according to the Counſel of his Will. Rom. 11. 33.

4. God does afford aſſiſting Grace to Sinners, which if they improved, he would not deſert them. The Goſpel *is the Miniſtration of the Spirit*,

Spirit, to illuminate, excite and perſwade Sinners not to forſake their own Mercy. *He ſtrives with them*, he woes *and waits to be gracious*, till by their obſtinate Reſiſtance they quench his holy Motions. 'Tis true, he diſpenſes Grace in different degrees, for he is the Maſter of his own Favours: but tho effectual converting Grace is not beſtowed upon all, yet there is common Grace, that has a tendency to Converſion, which if humbly and thankfully improved, ſuch is the moſt free and excellent Goodneſs of God, Men would receive further Supplies. But they are careleſs and oppoſite to his gracious Operations, therefore the Spirit is moſt righteouſly withdrawn from them. He that in Luxury has waſted his Eſtate, 'tis juſt he dies in Poverty. Beſides this, 'tis very conſiderable, that Men ſhall be condemned at the laſt Day not for mere

mere Impotence, but obſtinate Oppoſition: they loved *Darkneſs rather than Light, becauſe their Deeds are evil*: not for the want of that Grace they did not receive, but for the neglect to improve that Grace they had received, and rejecting what was offered. The *ſlothful Servant was condemn'd for hiding his ſingle Talent in a Napkin, not becauſe he had not five Talents.* John 3. 19. Mat. 25.

Secondly, 'Tis the great Deſign of God to glorify his Son. When he brought his Firſt-begotten into the World, the Command was, *Let all the Angels of God worſhip him. God has given him a Name above every Name, that at the Name of* [*Jeſus*] *every Knee ſhould bow, of things in Heaven, and Earth, and under the Earth; and every Tongue ſhould confeſs that Jeſus Chriſt is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father.* Thoſe who croſs his Supreme Wiſdom and Soveraign Will, ſhall by a conſtrain'd Submiſſion Heb. 1.

acknow-

acknowledg the high Dignity of his Son.

The great Command of the Goſpel is, that *Men ſhould believe on the Name of his Son Jeſus Chriſt: Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins.* The Death of Chriſt may be conſidered as an Act of Obedience to God, and of Love to Men. His Intention was to glorify God, by bringing loſt Souls to him. Now 'tis promiſed as a Reward of his Sufferings, he *ſhall ſee of the Travail of his Soul, and be ſatisfied.* He is infinitely pleaſed with the Salvation of Souls, as the Fruit of all his Anguiſh and bloody Agony. The Election of a number of the loſt World, that ſhall believe in him, and be adopted and ſaved by him, has a ſpecial reſpect to his Honour, that his Death might not be in vain: that the Son of God may be magnified

1 Joh. 3. 23.

Acts 5. 31.

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in his unſpeakable Love to them, and their ſincere Obedience to him: his relative Glory, as Head of the Body, will ſhine in them for ever.

'Tis alſo obſervable, the Decree of Election is of infallible Accompliſhment, both as to the Converſion and Perſeverance of the Elect, not only becauſe the Divine Will is unchangeable and inſuperable with reſpect to the Events determined by it, but with a peculiar regard to the Glory of Chriſt. No Principle of Oppoſition in the corrupt Heart of Man can fruſtrate the Operation of God's Spirit, either in the powerful entrance, or ſure continuance of his Grace. Our Saviour tells us, *All that the Father gives me, ſhall come to me.* And, ſpeaking of his Sheep, he ſaith, *My Father which gave them me, is greater than all: and none is able to pull them out of my Father's Hand.* The Purpoſe of

John 6. 37.

John 10. 29.

of God, and Purchaſe of Chriſt ſecure their Salvation: for theſe our Saviour intercedes, *Holy Father, keep through thine own Name, thoſe whom thou haſt given me, that they may be one, as we are.* His Mediation is never interrupted: when Chriſt's Prayer and God's Power are ineffectual, then may they fall away totally and for ever, whom God keeps, and Chriſt commends to his keeping. From hence it appears, that the Miniſters of the Goſpel are indiſpenſably obliged zealouſly to endeavour the Salvation of Souls, which the Father has deſign'd for the Honour of his Mercy, and which the Son of God eſteems his deareſt Glory.

John 17. 11.

The APPLICATION.

1. From hence there is juſt cauſe to admire the glorious Grace of God in converting Sinners, and making

making them willing to comply with the Terms of the Goſpel. Indeed 'tis ſtrange to Amazement, that Men involv'd under the Guilt of Sins ſo numerous and ſo heinous, and liable every hour to the Sentence of the Law, ſo ſure and ſevere, Eternal Death for their Sins, ſhould neglect a Pardon ſo dearly purchas'd, and ſo graciouſly offer'd, and not with the deepeſt Humility, with raviſhing Joy, and the higheſt Thankfulneſs receive it. Is there no Spirit, no Underſtanding left in them? Nay, is ſenſible Nature and its inviolable Inclinations ſo extinguiſh'd, that they are Enemies to themſelves? But if we conſider the Depravation of Mankind ſo inveterate and invincible, we ſhall turn the Current of our Wonder another way, that the obſtinate Perverſeneſs of any is ſubdued, and that with conſenting Wills they receive Chriſt as their Prince and Saviour.

Saviour. Election is the Fountain of diſtinguiſhing Grace: *Many are called, but few are choſen.* Converſion, Adoption, Juſtification, Sanctification, Glorification, are all the Fruits of electing Mercy. By the moſt gracious and free Act of his own Will, he choſe ſome out of the corrupt Generality, (and they are but a little diminutive Flock) to make them Veſſels of Honour, that his Goodneſs might be the more admirable. Thoſe who are made a *willing People*, were by the natural and contracted Hardneſs of their Hearts, as averſe and repugnant to the Heavenly Call as others; if after a thouſand Repulſes, the Spirit had been withdrawn, they had died in their Sins: but as 'tis ſaid of *Lot*'s miraculous Reſcue from the Flames of *Sodom*, *While he lingred, the Angels laid hold upon his Hand, the Lord being merciful to him, and brought him forth, and ſet him without*

Ephes. 1.
Rom. 8.
Ephes. 1.
2 Theſſ. 2.
Acts 13.
John 12.

without the City; ſo the free and omnipotent Grace over-rul'd their reluctant Hearts, and ſtrongly and ſweetly inclin'd them to God their ſupream and ſatisfying Good, and to come to Chriſt as the only means to reſtore them to the Favour and Enjoyment of God. The natural Man is no more able to believe with a ſaving Faith in Chriſt, than to obey the whole Law: *'tis the Gift of God.* He provides the Means of Salvation, and applies them; he by victorious Grace *leads Captivity captive*, and beſtows that moſt precious Gift upon his People. How many that enjoy'd the ſame Goſpel, and did not reject ſo many Invitations, nor ſo often grieve and vex the holy Spirit, nor ſo long abuſe the Patience of God, were juſtly left in their Sins? this will ſet a Luſtre upon ſpecial and ſaving Mercy. O, what a conſpicuous Diſcovery, what a lively and thank-

ful Senſe will there be of this Grace in the next World! Our Saviour tells the unbelieving Jews, *There*
Luke 13. 28. *ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of Teeth, when ye ſhall ſee* Abraham, *and* Iſaac, *and* Jacob, *in the Kingdom of God, and you your ſelves turn'd out.* The Compariſon of the oppoſite States will then be more joyful and tranſporting to the Saints, and more manifeſt and tormenting to the Reprobates. They ſhall feel a burning Thirſt after the Happineſs they have loſt, and be tortur'd between Deſire and Deſpair for ever.

2. Let thoſe who make light of the Invitations of Grace, conſider what will be the Iſſue of their Obſtinacy. Within a little while Conſcience will awaken the Remembrance of their careleſs Contempt of the Divine Mercy, and that will awaken Deſpair. To inſtruct ſuch Perſons, and make them afraid, that they may fly to the Sanctuary from

from the Deſtroyer, let them conſider,

(1.) This will render them inexcuſable. Their Obduration and final Ruin will be of themſelves. God is pleaſed to appeal to the Human Underſtanding, *What could I do more for my Vineyard, that I have not done?* His Works and his Words are declaratory of his Will, how pleaſing the Repentance and Life of Sinners is to him. He has prepar'd a Saviour and Salvation, and offers them to loſt Souls. In the Year of Jubilee, Liberty was proclaim'd for all the *Iſraelites* who had been Servants; but if any one would not leave his Maſter, his Ear was bored, and he was a Servant for ever. Thus the *acceptable Year of the Lord* is proclaim'd in the Goſpel, a happy Freedom to Sinners by Jeſus Chriſt: but thoſe who are in love with their reigning Luſts, refuſe this Freedom, and are con-

demn'd to the worſt Bondage for ever. God by his Authority commands them to *repent and believe the Goſpel*: He invites them by the moſt gracious Promiſes to accept and receive them: he expreſſes the moſt tender Compaſſions towards periſhing Sinners; *Why will ye die?* He reproaches their unaccountable Folly, *How long ye ſimple ones will ye love Simplicity?* He urges them by terrible Threatnings, not to neglect his offer'd Grace. But they are deaf to his loudeſt Calls: if a Luſt whiſpers from their Earthly Affections, they are preſently moved. No Mercy will ſoften them, no Reproofs will reform them; the richeſt Means of Grace are loſt, and they prodigally periſh. Now how juſtly do they fall under the condemning Sentence of the Law, who ſlight the Mercy of the Goſpel? *God takes no Pleaſure in the Death of a Sinner, but they take Pleaſure in their Sins:*

Sins: they die in their Sins, becauſe they will die: they are deprived of Life, *becauſe they will not come to Chriſt that they may have Life.* At the Day of Judgment loſt Sinners will intirely clear God, and deeply charge themſelves with their deſerved Ruin.

(2.) Such are irrecoverable. The Goſpel is the only Diſpenſation of Grace; if Men obſtinately reject it, their Condition is as deſperate as if they were bound in Chains of Darkneſs to the Judgment of the great Day. Mercy alone can heal us; and if that be wounded, our Sickneſs is incurable. *He that believeth not the Son, ſhall not ſee Life; but the Wrath of God abides on him.* His Doom is ſealed and irreverſible. God now ſpeaks in a ſtill Voice, but hereafter he will ſpeak in a Whirlwind to the Deſpiſers of his Grace. 'Tis true, we cannot ſay a Soul is quite loſt while there is John 3. 36.

a delay of Judgment: but the Scripture declares, that Sinners by their ſtubborn Refuſals of Mercy, make God inexorable to their Prayers: There is a day of Grace, and the Lapſe of it is fatal to the Neglecters. Of this there have been very fearful Examples: how many Deſpiſers of the Grace of the Redeemer in the courſe of their Lives, yet in the Agony of their laſt Departure, when their Sins with a ghaſtly Aſpect appear, and with frightful Horror they look into the bottomleſs Pit, Conſcience anticipates the Divine Judgment. Let the moſt compaſſionate Miniſters offer them the Cordials of the Goſpel, and tell them they deſpair too ſoon: the ſelf-condemning Conſcience replies, they repent too late. O that Men were early wiſe to ſecure their eternal Intereſt!

Luke 19. 42.

(3.) The neglect of Salvation, will aggravate Sin and the Judgment

ment of Men. *This is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and Men love Darkneſs rather than Light.* The higher the Diſobedience, the lower the Damnation will be of Sinners. The Heathens in their Race of ignorant Rebellion are not ſo guilty, nor liable to ſo heavy a Sentence as thoſe who diſobey the Goſpel. The *Iſraelites* had ſo abus'd the Mercies of God to his Diſhonour, there were no ſuch Rebels on Earth; the Prophet was fain to deſcend to Hell for a Compariſon to equal their Wickedneſs: *Hear the Word of the Lord, ye Rulers of* Sodom; *Give Ear unto the Law of our God, ye People of* Gomorrah. But thoſe who turn the Grace of God into an occaſion of their ſinful Security, are not to be parallell'd in Hell. The Devils rebel againſt the Creator, againſt his Authority and Laws, but Men rebel againſt their Soveraign and Saviour, and 'tis

John 3. 19.

Iſa. 1. 10.

admirable Grace. The Son of God interpos'd as Mediator to make God reconcilable to the World:

Heb. 2. *But he did not assume the Nature of Angels, he took no hold of them, nor can they take hold of him.* The Golden Scepter was never extended to them: Justice was strict and severe; for the first Sin they were presently expell'd from the Habitation of Glory, and their Doom is irrevocable. But Men are within the Reserves of Mercy; God spares them in order to Pardon, and renews his compassionate Calls to them to forsake their Sins, and live: by his Word and wonderful Patience he invites them to Repentance, and by Repentance to his Favour, and to Happiness. Now what a violent Provocation is the Contempt of such Mercy? The Furnace of Hell is heated seven times more for the Despisers of the Gospel. How will the remembrance of their

Folly

Folly rack their torn Minds? The fierceſt Furies cannot ſo torment them as their ſelf-condemning Conſciences.

3. Let the Miniſters of the Goſpel be excited to diſcharge their Commiſſion with Fidelity. I ſhall ſet down ſome Directions and Motives in order to it. The general Direction is this, *Salus Populi ſuprema Lex eſto*: The Salvation of Souls is the End of Preaching, and muſt regulate it. The Qualifications of a Miniſter to make him ſucceſsful are,

Firſt, Excellent Knowledg. An ignorant Miniſter is a plain Solæciſm, as to ſay a blind Eye, not capable to perform the Act proper to it. The Office and Authority without Abilities to exerciſe it, is in vain. The Apoſtle declares the Perfection of the Scripture, that 'tis profitable *for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Inſtruction in Righteouſneſs*; 2 Tim. 3.

teouſneſs; that the Man of God may be perfect, throughly furniſhed unto all good Works. He is to inſtruct the Ignorant, to remember the Careleſs, to refute the Erronious, to reſolve the Doubting, and comfort the Afflicted. Not only *Fidelity,*

Mat. 24. 45. *but Wiſdom is requiſite in the Servant whom his Lord made Ruler over his Houſe, to give them Meat in due ſeaſon.* There muſt be ſubſtantial Learning to *convince Gainſayers*, and ſpiritual Skill to underſtand the Arts of the Tempter, who will fail with every Wind, and make uſe of the various Diſpoſitions of Men to do them Miſchief. He feeds the blazing Preſumption of indulgent Sinners: He ſpeaks Peace to them when God is their Enemy: if there be ſometimes a ſad Countenance, the ſhadow of Repentance, it is ſufficient. But he perplexes tender and fearful Spirits, by ſuggeſting they do not mourn enough, to damp their

their Endeavours, and make them heartleſs in God's Service. Now 'tis a principal Duty of an Evangelical Miniſter to unmask the Malice of Satan, and defeat his Deſign: to preach the Word in that diſtinct manner, that ſecure Sinners may be afraid of Vengeance, and that the Penitent may apply the Divine Mercy. *He that wins Souls is wiſe.* The Terrors of the Lord muſt be ſet in array againſt the rebellious obſtinate Tranſgreſſors; but the indulgent Love of our Heavenly Father, the tender Compaſſions of our ſenſible Head and Saviour, and the Conſolations of the holy Comforter, are the Portion of relenting and returning Sinners. Prov. 11. 30.

An underſtanding Miniſter inſtructs his People in their Duty and Happineſs: he will not offer them *Stone for Bread*; intricate controverſial Matters that aſtoniſh and

cannot

cannot edify, but plain Evangelical Truths, the proper Food for the Soul.

The Manner and Language in Preaching muſt be anſwerable to the Majeſty of Divine Truths. There is nothing more odious than a ſacred Subject triflingly handled. The Affectation of Wit and flanting Eloquence fruſtrates the End of Preaching, that is, to convince Sinners of their Guilt and Miſery, and by the Conviction of Conſcience to make them fly to the Sanctuary, our bleſſed Saviour, for Protection: partly becauſe thoſe things that flatter the Fancy, are not proper to affect the Conſcience: light trimmings of Language, gaudy Expreſſions, glittering Points of Wit pleaſe the Imagination; but Conſcience is excited and inflam'd by repreſenting eternal Things with powerful Plainneſs, and in a ſolemn manner: and partly becauſe the

the Human Spirit being limited, while one Faculty is attentive, another ſuſpends its Activity and Operations; ſo that the Exerciſe of the Fancy hinders the Mind from ſerious reflecting on Divine Truths, and applying them to the Soul. Vain Ornaments in a Sermon are like a painted Complection; the more 'tis advanc'd to the Eye, the more 'tis abaſed to the Judgment.

The Diſcourſe of a Preacher ſhould directly go to the Heart: it ſhould be ſo fram'd as to prove and illuſtrate the Subject, and work on the Underſtanding and Affections. We have the Pattern of this in Scripture, where the Love and Mercy of God to his Children, and his Juſtice and Power againſt his Enemies, are repreſented in the moſt pathetical manner. I will produce an Inſtance of both: *Can a Woman forget her ſucking Child,* Iſa. 49. 15.

that

that ſhe ſhould not have Compaſſion on the Son of her Womb? yea, they may forget, yet I will not forget thee. What can be more ſupporting and comforting? The other Inſtance is as terrible. *God is angry with the Wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his Sword; he hath bent his Bow and made it ready. He hath alſo prepared the Inſtruments of Death.* This Deſcription of God's righteous Diſpleaſure is more powerful to ſhoot through the Conſcience of hardned Sinners, than the bare threatnings that Juſtice will ſurely puniſh them.

Pſal. 7. 11, 12, 13.

Secondly, A Miniſter ſhould be zealous and diligent in the diſcharge of his Office. St. *Paul* adjures *Timothy* in the moſt ſolemn and fearful manner, *I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall judg the Quick and the Dead at his appearing, and his Kingdom: Preach the Word, be inſtant in ſeaſon, and out of ſeaſon; reprove,*

2 Tim. 4. 1, 2.

reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-ſuffering and Doctrine. Did the Apoſtle ſtir up the Fire in ſo vigilant a Miniſter, how much more needful is it to blow up the Embers in our drowſy Spirits? Certainly if Conſcience be not ſear'd and dead, ſo ſharp a Charge will rouze it to the performance of our Duty.

Zeal for the Glory of our Saviour, if it inflames our Hearts, will fire our Lips, and animate our Sermons. Let Knowledg be the Breath to blow the ſacred Fire, and the moſt burning Zeal is not exceſſive. But our Affections at the higheſt are very defective: How many preach the Word ſo coldly, as if they had no deſire to ſave Souls from eternal Death?

How many Miniſters lie down in their Lazineſs, and wretchedly neglect their Duty, to better themſelves and benefit others in preach-

ing

ing the Goſpel? Idleneſs enervates and unſtrings the Bent of the Spirit: the Mind is benumm'd by a uſeleſs and ignoble Dulneſs.

Some who are deputed Shepherds, may think it a Diſparagement to their Greatneſs, to be frequently in ſo mean a Work as Preaching: whereas the Son of God was a Preacher of the Goſpel. Others make a Gain of the Flock, but put off the Inſtructing and Care of it to others. They will ſerve Chriſt by Proxy, who died for us in his own Perſon. How can they commit to others the Charge immediately entruſted to themſelves? What Exemption can they plead, what Account can they give to the great Shepherd?

Thirdly, Let Miniſters, that they may be ſucceſsful, adorn the holy, and without Holineſs dangerous Office of the Evangelical Miniſtry, by a ſutable Converſation.

Innocence

Innocence, and Abſtinence from foul Sins, is not ſufficient to recommend them; but *the Power of Godlineſs, and the Beauty of Holineſs* muſt ſhine in their Lives. They can never effectually teach others what they do not practiſe themſelves: if any Sin reigns in them, their Prayers cannot aſcend with Acceptance to God, and deſcend with a Bleſſing on the People. Let a Miniſter preach Divine Doctrine, yet if his Converſation be Earthly and Senſual, he is more likely to harden Sinners than to convert them. How unbecoming and diſgraceful are unholy Miniſters to their Profeſſion? What a Scandal do they give to the Profane, and occaſion to blaſpheme their high and holy Calling? Let ſuch prepare themſelves for *many Stripes*: they cannot eſcape a double Damnation, for the Neglect of their own Souls and the Souls of others committed to

them. Though a Heavenly Light ſhines in their Sermons, if in their Practice they are *dark Clouds, the Blackneſs of Darkneſs is reſerved for them for ever.*

Fourthly, Union among Miniſters is a happy Advantage to recommend their Doctrine to the People. Diviſion and Jealouſy will leſſen the Authority and Efficacy of their Preaching. If one Dog opens, the Deer is not alarm'd, but the full Cry rouſes him. When Miniſters with one Conſent declare the Wrath of God from Heaven againſt Sin, the Profane and Secure are afraid: and the awful Fear of Juſtice makes them ſeek for Mercy. 'Tis true, there cannot be expected an entire Conformity in Opinions among the wiſeſt and beſt Men: therefore in Doctrines not ſo clear nor of that moment as the great Truths, a mutual Forbearance is our Duty. But to coin

Contro-

Controverſies about clear and neceſſary Truths, and obſcure them by Oppoſition, is a great hinderance to the Succeſs of the Goſpel. Some worthy Men earneſtly deny the Goſpel to be a Law: Will they reform the Scripture? Is not the Goſpel called the Law of *Faith*, the *Law of Liberty*, the *Law of the Spirit of Life*? 'Tis true, the Goſpel is a Covenant of Grace, but it has all the Eſſentials of a Law: 'tis the revealed Will of the Soveraign Law-giver, commanding Sinners to repent and believe, upon no leſs Reward and Penalty, than Eternal Life to penitent Believers, and Eternal Death to thoſe who diſobey the Goſpel. Now the Command and Sanction are the proper Characters of a Law. If we duly conſider it, the Soveraignty of God is ſuch, that whatever Covenant he offers to the reaſonable Creature, has the Force and Obligation of a

Law. I inſtance in this one Point, that of late has occaſion'd an unhappy Difference. O the bleſſed State above, where Ignorance and Strife are aboliſh'd for ever!

Fifthly, Frequent and earneſt Prayer to God is a powerful Means to render our Miniſtry ſucceſsful. Paul *plants*, *and* Apollos *waters*, *but God gives the Increaſe*. Let a Miniſter be compleatly furniſh'd with Learning, Judgment, Eloquence, yet all his Labour will be fruitleſs without Divine Grace. A Key that is exactly fit to all the Wards of a Lock, cannot open it without a Hand to turn it. Let the moſt proper and powerful Motives to work upon the reaſonable Nature be repreſented, yet they cannot open the Heart, unleſs they are manag'd by the holy Spirit.

'Tis very obſervable, that in the Narrative of the Miracles by the Prophets, ſome Circumſtances are related,

related, that declare they were done by the Divine Power. Sometime the Command of God was before the Performance: thus in all the aſtoniſhing Works done by *Moſes*, the Command of God was the beginning. *Take thy Rod, ſtretch out thy Hand*, and others Orders that demonſtrate the miraculous Actions not to proceed from an inherent Virtue in his Perſon, but from a ſuperiour and borrowed Power. Sometimes Prayer was addreſt to God before the Miracles were done: Thus *Joſhua* firſt *ſpeaks to the Lord*, before he *commands the Sun to ſtand ſtill upon* Gibeon, *and the Moon in the Valley of* Ajalon. Thus *Elias* and *Eliſha* revived the Dead by Prayer to the Lord of Life. This was declaratory, that the Prophets were but Inſtruments, and that God was the abſolute Author of them. Accordingly in the Converſion of Souls, which is a Work as miraculous as any of

Exod. 7. 16, 19. & 8. 5. & 16. 9.

Joſh. 10. 12.

1 Kings 17. 20, 21.

2 Kings 4. 33, 34.

those illustrious Miracles, there must be the Divine Appointment of the Means, and ardent Prayer to God for his Blessing. 'Tis the great Encouragement of Ministers in their Service, that whatsoever is God's Ordinance shall effect that for which it is ordain'd: the Rod of *Moses* was powerful to subdue *Egypt*, to drown *Pharaoh* and his Host in the Red Sea. Three hundred Souldiers with *Gideon*, only arm'd with Lamps and Pitchers, destroyed the numberless Army of the *Midianites*. Astonishing Victory! *And the Gospel is the Power of God to Salvation.* But Prayer is requisite to obtain the holy Spirit, by whose Influence the Word is effectual to recover lost Souls to Heaven. And 'tis evident, that numerous and entire Conversions of Sinners have been by the Ministry of holy Men, who made it their great and earnest Request that they might be successful in bring-

bringing Souls to Chriſt. Cold Formalities are unacceptable to God, and without Efficacy; but Prayer actuated with Life and holy Heat of Affection, aſcends to Heaven and prevails. And what is more worthy of our conſtant and moſt ardent Deſires, than the Salvation of precious and immortal Souls?

II. To excite Miniſters to a faithful Diſcharge of their Duty, let them conſider,

1. The Example of our bleſſed Saviour. It was one principal Part of his Office to preach the Goſpel: this he undertook in wonderful Mercy, and perform'd with amazing Diligence. He riſes before Day, and retires himſelf into a ſolitary Place to pray, that he may loſe no time in Preaching. He preach'd on the *Mountain*, in the *Deſert*, in the *Ship*, in the *Synagogues*, in the *High-way*, in the

Houſe: no Place, no Perſons, no Time was unſeaſonable. It was *his Meat and Drink to do the Will of his Father.* Thus conſtant and delighted was the Son of God (who laid aſide his Majeſty and Glory, that he might inſtruct the People without terrifying them) in his bleſſed Work. How does his Example reprove and upbraid our Negligence? How ſhould it inflame us to imitate and honour him?

Mark 8. 35. Mat. 5. 1. Mark 6. 36. Mat. 13. Luke 10. 39. John 4. 34.

2. His Love to us ſhould make us ardent and active to ſave Souls, as a Teſtimony of our Love to him. Thus he ſpeaks to *Peter*, *Loveſt thou me? Feed my Lambs.* 'Tis his Delight and Glory to be the Saviour of Sinners. How dearly has he bought our Love? How willingly did he redeem us when we were Enemies? His Love condeſcended to our low State, to become a Servant, that he might exalt

exalt us to his State, to be the Sons of God. How does he out-love us? We do not love his Glory as he loved our Meanneſs, not him the bleſſed God, as he did us curſed Creatures. O the Miracle of his ardent Love to us! O the Strangeneſs of our cold Affection to him!

Love cannot be idle, but will add Fire and Vigor, and cauſe unfainting Perſeverance in our Lord's Service. Love and Duty will overcome all Difficulties. If we conſider by how many Titles he deſerves our Service, and feel the dear Obligations he has laid upon us, we ſhall compel *them to come in*, that our glorious King's *Houſe may be full.*

I ſhall only add, that to ſave Souls, the Work is glorious, and the Reward is more glorious. In the Aſſembly of immortal Spirits above, all united in Perfection and Felicity,

Thoſe

Thoſe who turn many to Righteouſneſs, ſhall ſhine with a brighter Glory, like the Stars for ever and ever. Who would be ſo unhappy as to prefer ſluggiſh Eaſe before a brighter Crown in Heaven?

Laſtly; I will finiſh this Diſcourſe with an earneſt Perſwaſive, that Men would comply with the Invitations of the Divine Mercy. Who can without ſome ſparks of Pity and Indignation ſeriouſly obſerve that Men are ſlight and fooliſh in things of eternal Intereſt, beyond all the degrees of Folly in the Concerns of this World? Who would that is in danger to loſe his Life or Eſtate, and has but one day to ſecure them, waſte it in frivolous Matters, when the Opportunity is ſo ſhort, and the Omiſſion is irreparable? Yet altho the preſent Life be certainly ſhort, and uncertainly continued, and Eternity depends upon our preſent

preſent ſecuring the Favour of God, and our Title in his Kingdom, Men employ their Time to *gain the World*, and neglect their Salvation, in compariſon whereof all the Affairs of Time are a buſy Folly, and vain Impertinence. Stupendious Security! Now to perſwade Men to come to Chriſt for Life, let them conſider,

1. 'Tis God's Call, to which preſent Obedience is due. Carnal Senſe is apt to object, Is it not a Man I ſee and hear? 'Tis true, but the Meſſage is the King's, not the Embaſſador's that brings it. A ſpiritual Eye looks beyond the Object of Carnal Sight, and ſees Chriſt in the Miniſter by the Light of Faith. Were this believed, how would it faſten our Minds and Senſes in the moſt ſerious Attention to the preaching of the Goſpel!

2. Make judicious Compariſons between this World and the next.

As

As in the Light of the Sun there is an Influence that cheriſhes the vital Heat, and a Power that extinguiſhes the Kitchin Fire; ſo the Light of God's Word has a double Efficacy, it kindles Heavenly, and quenches Earthly Affections. Indeed there wants neither Glory nor Joy, nothing of compleat Happineſs in the World to come, to raiſe our Affections and faſten them upon it: and in this World all is Vanity and Vexation to alienate our Affections from it. What infinite Diſtance and Diſproportion is there between the Objects of our Choice? Who would think it poſſible, but that 'tis viſible every day, that they who have Mortal Souls ſhould be careleſs of Eternal Things, and ſpend all their Pains and Paſſions about Things that expire with the Flux of Time? That they ſhould neglect ſolid Happineſs, and purſue ſhining Bubbles?

But

But the preſent World faſcinates their Underſtandings, inſpires their Fancy with Dreams of Happineſs here: Senſuality charms them into Stupidity: they are unwilling to be diſenchanted; they enjoy their Error, and are entertain'd with pleaſant Deluſions, till awaken'd by eternal Flames.

Let the enlighten'd Mind conſider and judg, the Soul is of a Divine Original, a Spiritual Subſtance of an everlaſting Duration, and can never be happy but in the Enjoyment of thoſe Objects that are Divine and Spiritual, commenſurate to its Capacity and Duration. Let a Man poſſeſs the World with all its Advantages and Delights, the ſtarved Soul would ſuffer infinite Want, and can only be ſatisfied with the Fulneſs of God.

Under what Notion ſoever Happineſs is conceived, 'tis only to be found

found in God. What can inrich a Spirit but Spiritual Treaſures? Holineſs is the richeſt Jewel in the Celeſtial Crown. What can dignify and ennoble a Spirit, but an Alliance to God as a Father, and the Likeneſs of him in his Divineſt Excellencies? What can ſatisfy an Immortal Spirit, and repleniſh it with Joy, but vital Union with God, and the immediate Influence of Almighty and Eternal Goodneſs? Carnal Men when they obtain their immediate End, Riches, Honours and Pleaſures, they fail in their main End, true Happineſs: they ſeem wiſe for the preſent, and are Fools for ever.

The Scripture tells us, *the Leſs is bleſſed of the Greater.* How can the preſent World that is ſo inferiour to Man in the Nobility of his Nature, afford Perfection and Satisfaction to him? How unſuitable, how

how inſufficient is it to fill the largeſt and ſtrongeſt Deſires of the Soul?

The World may cloy, but cannot ſatisfy us; but the Favour of God, the more 'tis enjoyed, the more 'tis deſir'd, and delighted in. Carnal Joy ſeems, but is not: Fear and Stings of Remorſe may be diſguiſed and gloſs'd over with a chearful Countenance and Carriage, but are not extinguiſh'd. Spiritual Joy ſeems not, but is: the Apoſtle tells us, *As ſorrowful, but alway rejoycing*: there may be a Winter in the Face, and a flouriſhing Spring in the Heart. There is a ſecret Sweetneſs in the Practice of Religion, that the Unrenewed are Strangers to: they cannot ſee a Taſte. 1 Cor. 6. 10.

Carnal Joy cannot repel its Contrary; it cannot endure the Aſſaults of the ſlight and tranſient Evils, to which we are expos'd here. Sickneſs,

neſs, Diſappointments, Apprehenſions of Evils that hover over us, may imbitter the moſt pleaſant Condition. A wounded Spirit, like an ulcerous Palat that is fretted and pain'd with the ſweeteſt things, turns all the Pleaſures of the World into Vexation. Fear ſtruck *Belſhazzar* at his Feaſt into a trembling. *But Peace with God, and the Joy that flows from it, the World can neither give nor take away*: 'tis as unable to deſtroy it as to produce it.

Rom. 5. 2, 3. *Believers rejoice in Tribulations.* All Carnal Joys are of ſhort Continuance.

1 Joh. 2. 17. *The World paſſes away, and the Luſts thereof.* Life is dying, and the Comforts of it. *All Fleſh is Graſs, and the Glory as the Flower of the Graſs*; that by Heat or Cold, by a Blaſt or a Worm is ſoon deſtroyed. All the Objects of the ſenſual Paſſions are very fading. The fineſt Stamp of Beauty in

in the Countenance, how eaſily is it defac'd by Sickneſs or Sorrow, by many Accidents or Age? Riches take the Wings of the Morning, and flee away from the Poſſeſſors: Honour is caſual and uncertain: the Scepter of *David*, ſo great a King, the Royal Branch of his Family, degenerated into a poor Carpenter.

The greateſt in the World, and the moſt proud of their Greatneſs, the Luxurious Voluptuaries, ſhall their Pomp and Delights continue with them in the Grave? Can they reign and revel when their Bodies are in the Duſt, and their Souls in Hell? Where is their admir'd Happineſs? Is it not all dead with them? nothing will then remain but the tormenting Remembrance of their Folly. *But the Word of the Lord endures for ever*: 'Tis an immortal Seed, and makes the Ground 'tis planted in, to live for ever. We 1 Pet. i. 25.

are assur'd, *he that does the Will of God, abides for ever.* The Blessedness of Heaven is everlasting, as God the Object of it, and the Soul that enjoys it. There is nothing defective in the State above, where Happiness is surrounded with Eternity. This is worthy of our most aspiring Ambition, of all our Hopes and Desires. Now is it possible that the present World, as empty as the Froth of the Sea, as vanishing as a Puff of Air, should be chosen before Celestial Happiness? It is by the most, so prodigiously are Carnal Men sway'd by Sense, that like Brute Beasts they are violently drawn by present Things, and little moved by Things spiritual and future. The Devil brings ready Money in his Hands, and tempts them with *this present World*: The Son of God offers in his Word Eternal Happiness, which is despised in the Comparison. If one should choose

chooſe a ſmall Sum at preſent before the ſure Reverſion of an Eſtate that would enrich him all his Life, would he not be deſpiſed by all for want of Underſtanding? Yet Men allow that Folly in their own Practice, that they would condemn in others. But ſuch is the Mercy of God, that to perſwade and prevail with us, he uſes all the Arguments that can work upon the Minds of Men. Hope and Fear are the ſtrongeſt Springs to move us; he therefore ſets before us Heaven and Hell, to attract our Hope, and excite our Fear. He makes uſe of Hell to kindle our Zeal in ſeeking the Kingdom of Heaven. The moſt violent Paſſions are over-ruled by Fear. Now in the threatning of Hell all the Motives of Fear are united. Little Evils are deſpiſed, not feared: great Evils that may be eaſily avoided, or apprehended very remote, are

not fear'd. But Evils that are imminent and deſtructive, are the moſt powerful Objects of Fear. Now every Man in his ſinful State, hangs by ſlender Strings over the bottomleſs Pit: and for his under-prizing and neglect of Heaven, falls under the Sentence that determines his State in an everlaſting Hell. There is no dawning in that Darkneſs of Sorrow, no refreſhing in thoſe Flames. There is a reſtleſs Remembrance of what is loſt, as a Light that comes through a Cranny in a Dungeon, that the forlorn Caitiff may remember the pleaſant reviving Light of which he is deprived. A thouſand Years of Torment cannot expiate the Offences of thoſe who diſobey the Goſpel: they are full of Miſery, and fuller of Guilt, that remains in its Weight upon them for ever.

The

The fear of this, if duly believed and conſidered, will bridle the ſtrongeſt Deſires after this vain World, and make Men wiſe, that they may not periſh in their Choice.

To conclude; Let thoſe who are invited to this Heavenly Feaſt, come with *the Wedding-Garment*: 'tis an Alluſion to the decent Cuſtom of wearing rich Apparel for Ornament and Luſtre at Marriage-Solemnities, to expreſs Joy, and to honour the Perſons that are married. Accordingly all that are in the Viſible Church, ſhould adorn the Goſpel by a Converſation becoming the Dignity and Purity of their high and holy Calling. Unfeigned Faith that unites us to Chriſt, and is effectual and evident in all good Works, is the *Wedding-Garment*. The Apoſtle exhorts the *Romans to walk honeſtly, as in the Day, not in Rioting*

and Drunkenneſs, not in Chambering and Wantonneſs, not in Strife and Envy; and whereas it might ſeem congruous to have added, in direct Contrariety to thoſe foul Sins, Put on Temperance, Chaſtity, Patience and Charity, he directs them to put on the *Lord Jeſus Chriſt*: becauſe he is the only Fountain of ſupernatural Grace, by which our Luſts are mortified. Faith

Iſa. 61. 10. *covers us with the Robe of his Righteouſneſs, and clothes us with the Garment of Salvation.* A counterfeit Livery of Profeſſion will not make us accepted of God. Is there any real Chriſtianity without Faith in Chriſt? and is there a lively Faith without Obedience to him? Can you be a Subject without Subjection? Chriſt is the King of Saints; they are the Citizens of his Kingdom, and only enjoy the Privileges of it. How many are Chriſtians in Title, and Infidels in Practice?

Practice? They live in the bold Contempt of the Divine Law, as if they were afraid the Juſtice of God ſhould not have cauſe enough to condemn them, or they would put it to a venture, whether he would be true to his Threatning, and puniſh accordng to his Law? Others, tho of a fair Converſation, are but half-Chriſtians: they do not ſincerely and entirely comply with the Terms of the Goſpel, to receive Chriſt for their *Prince and Saviour*. Let ſuch remember, *the King came in to ſee the Gueſts, and ſaw a Man without a Wedding-Garment*: this ſignifies God's judicial Obſervation of all that are in his Church, not one can eſcape his all-diſcerning Eye, the cloſeſt Hypocrite is tranſparent in his Sight. It follows in the Parable, *He ſaith unto him, Friend, How cameſt thou in hither without a Wedding-Garment?* Nothing will be available in Judgment, Mat. 22. 11, 12.

ment, not the moſt ſpecious and glittering Profeſſion, without Faith in Chriſt, and a renewed Heart and Life: yet may fondly dream they may be ſaved, tho not ſanctified. *He was ſpeechleſs*, reduced to a defenceleſs Silence and Confuſion. The Heart of Man is deceitful above all things, and above all things deceitful to it ſelf: How often in the trial of his Spiritual State, by Excuſes and falſe Gloſſes he deceives and ſatisfies himſelf. But there are no Apologies before the King: all things are entirely open to his Eyes: the Thoughts of Men will be their Accuſers, and their Works will depoſe againſt them. And how fearful is the Judgment that follows! *Then ſaid the King to the Servants, Bind him Hand and Foot, and take him away, and caſt him into outer Darkneſs; there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of Teeth. Bind him Hand and Foot*: the Expreſſion ſignifies

ſignifies that the revenging Power of God is inevitable and irreſiſtible. *Caſt him into outer Darkneſs*, that ſignifies the Separation from the reviving Preſence and Communion of God: *there is weeping and gnaſhing of Teeth*; the Expreſſion ſignifies the deepeſt Sorrow and higeſt Fury in the Damned. What a Diſcord and Tumult of the tormenting Paſſions is *there*? What Miſery, when the quickeſt Senſe to feel, and the greateſt Evils to be felt, are *there*? Hell is an intolerable Climate, where cold Deſpair and hot Rage are in Extremity for ever.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

ERRATA.

PAge 208. line 10. for. *toſt*, read *loſt*. P. 209. l. 10. f. *brighteſt*, r. *higheſt*. P. 225. l. 15. f. *reſt on*, r. *reſtore*. P. 232. l. 18. f. *Revelation*, r. *Elevation*. P. 248. l. 7. dele *Can*. l. 20. f. *of*, r. *to*. P. 251. l. 23. f. *furiouſly*, r. *furious*. P. 259. l. 8. f. *make a ſhew*, r. *feel the Reſtraints*. l. 24. f. *our*, r. *their*. P. 274. l. 20. f. *take*, r. *taſte*. P. 350. l. *ult*. f. *Sin and the Judgment*, r. *the Sin*. P. 351. l. *ult*. f. *'tis*, r. *his*. P. 360. l. 7. f. *frequently*, r. *frequent*. P. 324. l. 1. f. *it*, r. *and*. P. 336. l. 13. f. *directing*, r. *decreeing*. P. 341. l. 7. f. *is*, r. *which is*. l. 10. del. *not only*. l. 13. f. *but with*, r. *hath*. ☞ P. 372. l. 19. f. *mortal*, r. *immortal*.

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